POPULAR PATRISTICS SERIES

# On God and Christ

## The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius

ST GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS

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## *O*n *G*od and *C*hrist

## *T*he *F*ive *T*heological *O*rations and *T*wo *L*etters to *C*ledonius

*The Five Theological Orations (Orations 27–31) translated into English by* Frederick Williams *(Oration 27) and* Lionel Wickham *(Orations 28–31) with Introduction and Notes by* Lionel Wickham

*The Two Letters to Cledonius (Letters 101 and 102) translated into English by* Lionel Wickham *with Introduction and Notes by* Lionel Wickham

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# Acknowledgements

The present translation of the Orations was made by Fred Williams, now professor at The Queen's University Belfast, and myself, when we were lecturers at Southampton University in the seventies, he in classics, and I in theology. He was responsible for the translation of the first Oration, I for the rest. It was made for the use of students of Church history as part of an introduction to Christian doctrine of the patristic period. Subsequently Fred Norris, of Emmanuel School of Religion, took it up as a basis for his extensive commentary on these orations, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning*. I am grateful to Professor Norris and his publishers, E.J. Brill of Leiden and New York, for agreeing to our republication here of the translation. I have made a few changes, but it remains basically the same. The translation of the Letters to Cledonius is new.

# Gregory of Nazianzus: An Introduction for the Reader

## Career and Personality: A Brief Sketch

Gregory, known, when his reputation had consolidated a century or so after his death, as "the Theologian" for the special distinction of his exposition of the doctrine of God, was born in or about the year 330 and died in 390. His life and career were linked with those of two other churchmen from Cappadocia, the brothers Basil ("the Great" c. 329/330–378/379), metropolitan bishop of Caesarea and another Gregory (c. 335/340–c. 390) bishop of Nyssa. Together they are commonly called "the Cappadocian Fathers" and are generally reckoned to be, along with Athanasius (c. 295–373) and Cyril of Alexandria (c. 375–444), in a privileged sense, yardsticks of patristic theology. Of this group of three Cappadocians we know the career and personality of the Theologian Gregory best. Indeed of all the great patristic writers, Latin and Greek, he is second only to Augustine of Hippo (354–430) in the degree of self-revelation he permits himself, if less often to his advantage: for if I could wish to have known Augustine even better; I feel I know Gregory enough.

He was born at Nazianzus (present day Turkish Nenizi) into a family endowed with a large estate, well-off Cappadocian provincials and proud of it: "gentry" certainly, but not "nobility." If it grates on the nerves to find they owned slaves, that is a mark of the adjustment necessary to enter into *rapport* with the habits of a fourth-century gentleman-bishop; for that is what Gregory's father, another Gregory ("the Elder") was, and what our Gregory had in some measure and for some time unwillingly to become. The elder Gregory had belonged to a sect, the "Hypsistarians," about which nothing reliable is known, before being enrolled in the catechumenate by Bishop Leontius of Caesarea on his way with other bishops to the Council of Nicaea (325). Baptized soon after, he was ordained to the episcopate of Nazianzus in 329. He was married to Nonna, a committed Christian lady of similar social standing. The Theologian was elder brother to Caesarius, destined to serve in high political office, under emperors of religious persuasions regretted by his family, until his early death in 368, and younger brother of the extraordinarily named Gorgonia, the sister whose funeral sermon he preached within a few years after Caesarius' death. He always speaks with the deepest respect, if perhaps a shade distantly, of his parents. Loyalty to his father and reluctant obedience to his father's wishes were characteristic of

him. They took him to an expensive education at various distinguished institutions ending with the university of Athens in 350. There he met Basil, studied assiduously the arts of public speaking and poetry, and would have wished to stay had he not been called back, now baptized and aged a mature 28, to the duties of family and church. It had been a long training in skills comparable with for complexity and surpassing in range, those of a modern opera singer. They were to pay off in the learned, well constructed, and at least in the smaller pieces, often beautiful and affecting, verses, and in the finely honed rhetoric of his sermons. A sort of preparation for ordination directly to the priesthood by his father in 361 was provided by joint study with Basil, at Basil's retreat on his Pontic estates, and by collaboration on a selection of extracts, the *Philocalia*, from Origen; it saved some important passages of a writer whose reputation was to be discredited in years to come but whose influence on the Cappadocian Fathers, and indeed patristic theology in general, was fundamental. Gregory had been a reluctant ordinand. The prospect of ministry was more than he could bear; study and the practice of the religious life were, he felt, his vocation. He fled for support to Basil. No doubt he found Basil's austerities just as unappealing. At any rate duty, and without doubt the paternal voice too, called him back home to deliver an effective apologia for his flight (Or. 1) which had evidently been much, and very naturally, resented. The difficulties of ministry formed the basis for his defense and there were, amongst other things, difficulties to be resolved at home, of Gregory the Elder's own making, in relation with the monks of the diocese.

The pattern of flight from overtaxing situations was, however, to be repeated more than once, and indeed not long after at the next turning point in Gregory's career: his ordination as bishop of Sasima. Basil became bishop of Caesarea in 370, having first induced Gregory the Elder, according to the petulant and perhaps over-protective report of his son, to risk his health by turning out to vote. For though Basil was a great man, nothing, certainly not so trivial a thing as friendship, could be allowed to hinder a good cause: which in this case meant voting for him. So when the emperor Valens soon after Basil's election decided, for administrative reasons having little to do with Basil so far as we can tell, to sub-divide the province of Cappadocia and when, since ecclesiastical followed civil boundaries, Basil found himself left with a reduced and poorer see, Basil sought to make up for the deficiency by raising unimportant places to episcopal status. He stocked them with loyal appointees, in the attempt to shore up his diminished authority even if that meant trampling upon the sensibilities of our

Gregory and of his own younger brother, the uncomplaining other Gregory who meekly accepted the small town of Nyssa. Basil persuaded the Theologian to accept ordination to the town of Sasima. Gregory went to the miserable staging post, which would constitute his diocese, was warned off by the hostile neighboring bishop and went back home, indignant at the insult. There he assisted his father, whose death in 374 offered a welcome chance to break with pastoral ministry. By leaving he would force the appointment of a successor. For four years he lived at Seleucia (present-day Turkish Silifke), until in 378 he was invited to go to Constantinople to take charge of the proprietary chapel of the Anastasia (Resurrection). We might call it a nonconforming conventicle, for unlike the principal churches of te capital, it was in the hands not of the state Church, which did not receive the creed of Nicaea, but of pro-Nicenes. Here Gregory preached the doctrine of God characteristic of himself and shared in essentials with his fellow Cappadocian Fathers. In so doing he gave eloquent expression to arguments and intuitions, accepted by probably the larger part of his thinking contemporaries in the Church, about the being and status of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. But only the naïve will suppose that the triumph of the creed of Nicaea could have been secured without the intervention of the state. The role played by the new Emperor Theodosius was comparable with Constantine's. If Constantine made the empire Christian, Theodosius made it Nicene and Catholic. Gregory was the anxious beneficiary of the change, as he was led under armed guard into the church of the Holy Apostles, through hostile crowds not keen to see their bishop, Demophilus, extruded so roughly. Like all religious reformations, pain was involved, with scenes like this in Constantinople repeated elsewhere.

As bishop of Constantinople Gregory was a failure. He allowed himself to be schemed against by a young man with a handsome face and found himself turned out of office by a cabal of bishops led by the pope of Alexandria; and that after he had been made president of the council of 381 in Constantinople, which was to be accounted the Second Ecumenical Council and which produced the familiar revised version of the creed of Nicaea with its article on the Spirit reflective of Gregory's teaching. He writes, with the cattiness that is one of his less admirable features, about much of this in a long poem on his life. He wrote a sermon too, Or. 42, a wonderfully theatrical piece. It imagines (for it was never, of course delivered) himself in effect telling the assembled bishops how unkind they have all been to him and bidding tearful adieu to the churches he had loved. My guess is that he made a wretched president. If the bishops rid themselves of

him on the pretext that he had been made bishop of Sasima and there, by the rules of the Council of Nicaea, he was bound to stay, that was because he was a liability. His temperament was against him, to be sure. I daresay he never wanted the position anyway, and that he lost it is only another form of his habit of flight in the face of difficulty. He was, you might say, a hothouse flower, brilliant and blooming in warm admiration and a modicum of protective privacy, withering under the cold blast of stress. Besides this he was perhaps almost as ill from time to time as he says he was. But that too might well have been mostly in Gregory's mind. He lived, after all, till he was 60 and produced a very solid body of careful writing in days when to be a writer was expensive, time-consuming, and exacting in the extreme. A great many good lines can be produced on a bed of assuaged affliction at a spa.

On retirement to the family estate he devoted himself to editing his letters and writing about himself, adjusting his memory for posterity. He never edited his sermons in the same way: there are repetitions, as for example between Orr. 38 and 45, which he surely would have removed. He also wrote his will, a reading of which I recommend as highly instructive. Besides that, he found himself caught up unwillingly in the Apollinarian controversy and parish affairs, as we see from the letters to Cledonius, whose context I discuss below.

There is no doubt that he was a touchy, rather vain, and sometimes downright tiresome personality. He was waspish and given to self-justification. When the other Gregory, newly of Nyssa, turned up to invite him to take up his duties at Sasima, he roasted him from the pulpit (Or. 11). But perhaps all that part of the sermon was made up afterwards; it is kinder to convict him of fiction than of misuse of his office as preacher. Yet there is also no doubt that he had a deep sense of the presence of God, a wonderful grasp of essentials (let the reader note the concluding paragraph of the *Fifth Theological Oration* with its insistence that images of God must all be transcended, to prove the point!), and great persuasive power. All theologians, and the Theologian amongst them, are a bit of a fraud: we are "deceivers yet true." But relatively he was less fraudulent, more true, and less deceptive than most. I do not think he often wrote (you could not say "never wrote" of anybody!) what he had not himself felt about the divine, or at least aspired to feel. The justice, though, of that observation I leave the reader of these translated pieces to decide.

## Background in Historical Theology to the Five Theological Orations

*Title and contents*

The title *Five Theological Orations* has no basis in the manuscript tradition, and appears, so far as I know, only in the printed editions. Nonetheless the title is apt, for the doctrine of God is the theme of these addresses which form a series and may well have been delivered as such in Constantinople, perhaps even at the Anastasia, though they will, of course, have been modified for publication afterwards. “Theology” in the strict sense of the doctrine of God (in distinction from “the economy,” or providential ordering of the world by God) was the primary doctrinal issue for the Church of the fourth century. Christian theology has a problem that may be set out in various ways, but perhaps most simply as follows: when we speak of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit do we think of each of them as “God” in the same sense? The upshot of the long discussion of the fourth century, commonly and inexactly called the “Arian controversy,” was to yield the answer “yes.” The creed of Nicaea (325) as modified by that of Constantinople (381) set it out in terms of the consubstantiality of the Father and the Son and the reverence due jointly to them and to the Holy Spirit.

*The Anomean opposition*

The Church would never have reached unanimity on either the content or that formal expression of the faith, had it not been for the existence of a group of theologians who vigorously opposed both. These were the “Anomeans” (“dissimilarians”), or as they were to be known widely from the name of one their most prominent spokesmen, “Eunomians.” They have in recent years been named “Neo-Arians,” but they themselves would have rejected the implication that they were followers of that mere Alexandrian priest. Gregory never names them in these orations, but just because they are unnamed they are all the more invisibly present. Eunomius (c. 335–c. 393), a Cappadocian, had for his teacher Aetius (ob. c. 370) from Antioch. Neither could claim the social standing of Basil and the two Gregorys. Aetius was the son of a bankrupt army contractor; Eunomius had a small estate. A career in the Church was to make both better off: Aetius, after various false starts, one of which was medicine, took up philosophical and theological interests. He was made deacon by bishop Leontius of Antioch but was dissatisfied apparently with the limited scope it gave to teaching and with its pastoral obligations. He went to Alexandria where he was invited by prominent exponents of views akin to those of Arius to be ordained

bishop: he refused on the ground that the invitation came from associates with heresy. For Aetius it was a matter of principle that the difference of substance, or being, between Father and Son should be maintained. Arius, though he might have been sound about some things, was, for Aetius, too far to the right and certainly a long way from the truth when he spoke of the Father as unknowable and the Son as not simple in being but a multiplicity for human thought about him. Here in Alexandria Eunomius joined him as his pupil. His reputation as a theologian must have grown, and hae drawn the attention of the emperor Constantius' cousin Gallus, whose court was at Antioch, to which the pair returned for he was engaged to give instruction to the future apostate emperor Julian, Gallus' half-brother. Malice, but not so far as I know ancient malice, might connect apostasy and instruction; at any rate the grateful Julian on coming to the throne in 361 gave Aetius a property in Mitylene. But before that change in his fortunes, Aetius, with Eunomius, had fallen foul of bishops alarmed by their radical teachings, who in 358 punished the pair for their theology by delating them to Constantius as alleged conspirators in Gallus' attempted coup of 354.

Things changed for them again, when Constantius dropped the party of the bishops who had objected to Eunomius and Aetius, and, trying to secure harmony in a Church troubled by discussion of the substance, the being, of God, in effect forbade a decision on the issue. Under pressure from Constantius the council of Constantinople of 360 decreed that the word "substance" was not to be mentioned in the Church's creed, and that the Son should be declared "similar to the Father in accordance with the Scriptures." He took the trouble to interview Aetius whose views were increasingly alarming even to otherwise stolid churchmen, but did not understand his answer: that the Son is extremely like his Father but totally unlike in substance. Aetius' banishment for blasphemous self-contradiction followed (360). Eunomius fared better. Like Aetius he was willing to serve in a Church whose official formula did not rule out his theology: "like according to the Scriptures" he could accept; but never "like in substance." He made a good speech at the council defending his views and accepted the see of Cyzicus on the promise of the rehabilitation of Aetius. That did not happen and he took the opportunity of accusations by his clergy of teaching heretical "dissimilarity of substance" to resign. His sermons had been examined by the bishop of Constantinople but found fully within the permitted creedal parameters, though, like others amongst his contemporaries, he did deny the perpetual virginity of Mary; but he clearly perceived where he was not wanted and that the established Church was not congenial to his theology. He was later

arraigned on a charge before a tribunal in Antioch, but Constantius died first and the matter lapsed under the new religious settlement of Julian.

Under the next emperor, Jovian, the breach between the Anomeans and the Church at large became ever more pronounced. Aetius was ordained bishop and a small sectarian Anomean Church united by loyalty to the pair and opposition to the Nicene standard, came into being. Its headquarters were in the capital where it is clear they had, despite harassment, a following. On Aetius' death Eunomius buried him with opulent and eye-catching ceremony. Under Theodosius the sect became subject to the rigors of the laws against heresy: in effect, its members were deprived of basic human property-rights. Nonconformity must pay a heavy price, but judging by the way laws against them had to be repeated, there were those, at least for a few years, who were willing to pay it. Their Church, though, had, like all one-issue groups, only an infirm hold on a perduring existence. Founded on doctrinal purity it perished on it. After Eunomius retired from leadership it fell apart over the newer issues of the person of Christ. But the claim to be remembered, and indeed valued, by the generations of Christians who have united to reject these Anomeans is secure: without them we should have had neither the specific teaching of the Cappadocian Fathers nor the general acceptance of the creed of Nicaea. The creed eminently succeeded in excluding Anomean teaching; the Cappadocian Fathers formed theirs in dialectic with it.

*The Anomean legacy and that of the Cappadocians: doctrines and dialectics*

Aetius left a brief synopsis of his teaching cast in a series of short deductions, the *Syntagmation*. From Eunomius there survive an *Apology*, being the speech mentioned above, which was answered by Basil in his first important writing, the three books *Adversus Eunomium* ("Against Eunomius"). Eunomius replied to these in a second *Apology* which Basil was prevented by death from answering. His brother Gregory did so in his *Contra Eunomium* ("Against Eunomius") *I* and *II*. A third *Apology* was likewise countered by Gregory in his *Contra Eunomium III* in ten books. These rebuttals contain a good portion of Eunomius' rebutted text. Eunomius' *Statement of Faith*, presented to Theodosius the Emperor in 383, was preserved along with Gregory's *Refutation* of it. A few other fragments and anecdotes about the teaching of both men also survive. These pieces give us a clear perspective on the Anomean system and forbid its usual facile misrepresentation. For the first thing that must be said about the Anomeans is

that they did not teach the unlikeness of Father and Son. Such an idea is absurd and has never been maintained by any reputable theologian: to speak of Father and Son is necessarily to speak of "likeness." Their claim was that *substance* and *agency+effects of a substance* are necessarily different and incomparable. There is no comparability, to attempt a modern example, between the musicians and the ideally perfect image, the CD, they produce, because the substances, the beings or things, are distinct and different without possibility of confusion. So it is with the unique Godhead and the Only-begotten Son. Now to speak of "the Father" is, they thought, to speak the language of the Bible, transcribing as it does for us, the divine mind and using God-given words in their fullest and most appropriate sense. When the Bible speaks of God the Father it betokens pure agency and tha means pure volition: God the Father is God as active will. Between substance and activated effect there is a due proportion, and between active intention and effect there is likeness. So what is the substance of God? It is underived reality, the underived or ingenerate being whose definition is ingeneracy. God is "absolute reality" (this is not the term the Anomeans use, but is what they mean), the recognition of whom for what he is, is the chief point of religion. God is "He who is" (Exodus 3:14), the "sole true God" (John 17:3) to whom the Only-begotten Son and God points us, who is the supreme offspring and product of the incomparable Father and the perfect image of the divine will: not of the divine substance, for that is by definition unique. This Only-begotten brought into being by his activity and will first the Holy Spirit and after that the rest of the inferior realities. The system is thus of a graded series of distinct and incommunicable particular substances and "substance" is for them not a generic concept. The Only-begotten is truly "God," but generated, or created (the terms amount to the same thing for the Anomeans, since "creation" is but "generation" purged of its corporeal suggestion), and subordinate. The Anomeans did not, I think, call the Holy Spirit "God," nor did they ascribe to the Spirit any role beyond heartening the faithful.

Though it is the negative aspects of the Anomeans' system that catch the eye, as they caught the eye of their contemporaries, it is uncritical polemics to discredit their devotion to Christ or their reverence for Christian tradition. "If the Only-begotten is so wonderful, how much more wonderfully sublime must be the power that made him and the unique Reality he disclosed and invites us to revere as he revered it! How wonderful too the natural obedience he owed his Father and lovingly rendered for our sake!" Thoughts like these can be overheard behind their often cold words. And as for tradition, they might justly

have claimed an even share of it: tracing it back through Origen to Justin and the earliest Christian theologians who had presented the Son and Word as a secondary God, a substitute for and representative of, his transcending cause. Yet even when full allowance is made for the warmer religious tone that liturgy and biblical exegesis will have bestowed upon the presentation of their teaching, it is not surprising that Eunomianism did not become the mind of the Church catholic. The simple minded emperor Constantius got it right! It could never sound truly loyal to Christ to emphasize the *inferiority* of the Son. Moreover there are weak points, many of which are attacked by the Theologian in these Five Theological Orations. The first rebukes the Eunomians for their exaltation of dialectic as the way to the knowledge of God; and that strikes home. The second undermines the idea that God can be fully known by the human mind and that God's absoluteness or ingeneracy is a positive attribute. The third and fourth deal with the interpretation of the being of the Son. Some of the most significant and long-standing difficulties raised by the notion of Christ's deity and by biblical exegesis are dealt with. The vital distinction between the language appropriate to the pre-incarnate and the incarnate Christ is drawn, so allowing the "iferiority" of the human Jesus its full weight. It was left to the other Cappadocians to deal with the nature of human language about God, arguing that it was itself of human creation (Gregory of Nyssa in *Contra Eunomium II*), and that the substance of God is the common Godhead of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who accordingly are to be spoken of as "three hypostases and one substance" (Basil, in more than one of his letters, followed by his brother). Gregory's scope in these orations widens from now on and the Eunomians are no longer the sole opponents he seeks to convince. There was a significant body of opinion which needed to be persuaded that to call the Holy Spirit "God" directly or "consubstantial" with the Father was not a step too far. The fifth moves on to proclaim the full Godhead and consubstantiality of the Spirit as a revelation belonging to the era of the Church. The dialectic with the Eunomians in which Gregory has been engaged has not proved barren, since it has allowed him to reach the intuition that there is an educative and progressive unfolding of knowledge of the God whose being is unfathomable.

This is one of those new thoughts in Christian teaching which regularly take a long time to be assimilated and have not perhaps been assimilated even at the present. Yet how much in Cappadocian theology is not new but gives the impression of being just the Eunomian in reverse! If God is simple, that is, one and one thing only, then that one thing is either knowable or unknowable. The

Eunomians say the first, the Cappadocians the second. Or to take another example that does not figure in the argument of these orations, the Eunomians have a metaphysical portrait of Christ which does not include a human intellect, and in consequence the passive experiences of Christ belong directly to the Godhead. The Cappadocians argue for a Christ who has, as incarnate, a human soul. Again, both sides agree to distinguish substance from activity; neither speaks of substance and accidents in connection with the Three but opposite consequences are drawn. It is no special slur upon the intellectual vigor of the Cappadocians to say that they developed their doctrinal position by denial of their opponents' propositions, because, to mention but one obvious fact, the Eunomian theology too is built up dialectically. Not only so, but religious, like political, thought proceeds regularly by debate, the parties, so to say, claiming their adversaries' clothes and laundering them. The shared presuppositions and common dilemmas oppositely resolved are obvious enough here. But it is, I think, peculiarly the case that the Cappadocian doctrine of God, to repeat, is not explicable historically, nor indeed is really comprehensible, without reference to the Eunomians.

## Reading the Five Theological Orations: Some Points of Reference

These sermons are as much high art as they are high theology. They suffer, of course, in translation despite the endeavors of their translators. How can the different meanings of the Greek word *logos* in the opening lines of the second be conveyed in English? I have done my best, but I cannot capture the swift modulations between successive repetitions of the same word in its varied senses of "theology," "reason," "speech," and "Divine Word." The Theologian is a good enough reason in himself to learn Greek and those justly dissatisfied with translations of him should learn to do without them. What we translators might aspire to do for our readers is to allow Gregory to engage with them, meeting them, despite all the differences that cut them off by language and a world and way of life transformed, on their level. For the high art of these pieces shows not only in the subtle verbal transitions I have mentioned but also in their rhetorical technique: and by that I mean nothing sinister—certainly not the art of "making the worse appear the better cause"—rather the art of effective disclosure. Gregory always engages with his congregation, taking them into his confidence and inviting them to share his standpoint. In the first Oration, at the end, the engagement takes the form of imagined dialogue but it has started with the

opening words which challenge the hearers to discern and condemn the current trivialization of religion. Look, he says, at what inappropriate discussion has done to social life and to religion itself. The second Oration takes up the invitation again. In the opening passage Gregory attempts to evoke the grandeur and awe of encounter with God and summons the hearer to a joint ascent of Sinai. It is a piece of writing that must be read with a certain allowance, where the implied comparison between evocation of the divine in theological discourse and direct encounter with the divine is dangerously overblown. Much more tellin is the tour of the universe in all its vastness and range on which he then takes the listener after he has disclosed the divine mysteriousness.

The third and fourth Orations for the most part use a mixture of the question and answer form of argument and the straight deduction to elicit attention to what are often complex reasonings. The technique is subtle here. The Eunomians are not the only opponents to be considered and the risk is that the mistake of the Eunomians identified in the first Oration will be repeated. Gregory, I would suggest, succeeds in maintaining the level of religious involvement without lapsing into frigid debate. The fifth Oration, the finest I would suggest, takes the listener into new territory. Gregory has to persuade his listeners to join him in recognizing the Holy Spirit as God and as consubstantial with Father and Son. They will have known what the difficulties were: the Holy Spirit is not called "God" in the Bible nor was he called "consubstantial" by Basil (or, of course, in the revised Nicene Creed of the council of 381). Does Gregory too easily dismiss the charge of tritheism? Does he duck the objection that the proposed differentiating property for the Holy Spirit, "procession," is inadequate to distinguish the Spirit from the Son who is begotten? To the latter charge we might put into his mouth the just reply that one poet says "My love is like the red, red rose," another "Meine Liebe ist grün wie der Fliederbusch." There is a difference even if we cannot put into words what it is. So there is between "generation by" and "procession from" the Father. The former charge is more properly made against Basil and the other Gregory than against the Theologian. But it is not my intention here to defend Gregory. If the translator has done his work properly he will have roused the reader to engage in sympathetic criticism of the text without the need for external prompting. The engaged reader will think through the implications of Gregory's words. But let me invite that same reader's attention to the delicate nd moving conclusion of the Oration where Gregory expresses that mood, so rudely disturbed by the Eunomians, of reverent willingness not to know. There is a kind of return to the beginning theme of the

set of Orations. I do not think it is accidental. It is as if he were saying to us: “Here are the most important truths I want you to share with me. The Divine is not to be limited or cheapened by human talk. It discloses itself in the mystery of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And in this mystery there lies the possibility of human redemption.”

Of set purpose I have provided few notes to these orations, limiting myself to the bare minimum necessary to understand the meaning of the text. (I have allowed myself more latitude in the notes to the two Theological Letters, where the history requires rather more explication.) To those who look for detailed analysis and discussion of Gregory’s sources and for parallels, I commend Professor Norris’ book named in the bibliography. “In these questions to hit the mark is not useless, to miss it is not dangerous.” By which quotation from Gregory’s *First Theological Oration* I mean to combine respect for the advanced study of these orations which places their arguments in context, with the suggestion that the first task of the reader is simply to read with care what is not a difficult or obscure text, and my hope is that I have done enough to make that possible.

ORATION 27

# An Introductory Sermon against the Eunomians[1]

*The First Theological Oration*

## 1

I shall address my words to those whose cleverness is in words. Let me begin from Scripture: “Lo, I am against you and your pride.”[2]

There are people, believe me, who not only have “itching ears”:[3] their tongues, also and now, I see, even their hands itch to attack my arguments. They delight in the “profane and vain babblings and contradictions of the Knowledge falsely so-called,”[4] and in “strife of words”[5] which lead to no useful result. “Strife of words”—that is the term given to all elaborate verbiage by Paul, who proclaims and confirms the “short and final account,”[6] Paul, the pupil and teacher of fishermen. These people I speak of have versatile tongues, and are resourceful in attacking doctrines nobler and worthier than their own. I only wish they would display comparable energy in their actions: then they might be something more than mere verbal tricksters, grotesque and preposterous word-gamesters—their derisory antics invite derisive description.

## 2

But in fact they have undermined every approach to true religion by their complete obsession with setting and solving conundrums. They are like the promoters of wrestling-bouts in the theaters, and not even the sort of bouts that are conducted in accordance with the rules of the sport and lead to the victory of one of the antagonists, but the sort which are stage-managed to give the uncritical spectators visual sensations and compel their applause. Every square in the city has to buzz with their arguments, every party must be made tedious by their boring nonsense. No feast, no funeral is free from them: their wranglings bring gloom and misery to the feasters, and console the mourners with the example of an affliction graver than death. Even women in the drawing room, that sanctuary of innocence, are assailed, and the flower of modesty is despoiled by this rushing into controversy.

Such is the situation: this infection is unchecked and intolerable; “the great mystery”[7] of our faith is in danger of becoming a mere social accomplishment. I am moved with fatherly compassion, and as Jeremiah says, “my heart is torn within me.”[8] Let these spies therefore be tolerant enough to hear patiently what I have to say on this matter, and to hold their tongues for a while—if, that is, they can—and listen to me. You can lose nothing by it, in any case: either I shall speak “to them that have ears to hear,”[9] and my words will bear fruit, and you will benefit (for, while he who sows the Word sows it in every kind of mind, it is only the good and productive kind which bears fruit);[10] or else, if you spit on this speech of mine as you have on others, when you go away you will take with you more material for your mockery and attacks on me, and you will then feast yourselves even better. But do not be surprised if what I say is contrary to your expectations and contrary to your ways, since you profess to know all and teach all—an attitude which is too naive and pretentious: I would not offend you by saying stupid and arrogant.

## 3

Discussion of theology is not for everyone, I tell you, not for everyone—it is no such inexpensive or effortless pursuit. Nor, I would add, is it for every occasion, or every audience; neither are all its aspects open to inquiry. It must be reserved for certain occasions, for certain audiences, and certain limits must be observed. It is not for all people, but only for those who have been tested and have found a sound footing in study, and, more importantly, have undergone, or at the very least are undergoing, purification of body and soul. For one who is not pure to lay hold of pure things is dangerous, just as it is for weak eyes to look at the sun’s brightness.

What is the right time? Whenever we are free from the mire and noise without, and our commanding faculty is not confused by illusory, wandering images, leading us, as it were, to mix fine script with ugly scrawling, or sweet-smelling scent with slime. We need actually “to be still”[11] in order to know God, and when we receive the opportunity, “to judge uprightly”[12] in theology.

Who should listen to discussions of theology? Those for whom it is a serious undertaking, not just another subject like any other for entertaining small-talk, after the races, the theater, songs, food, and sex: for there are people who count chatter on theology and clever deployment of arguments as one of

their amusements.

What aspects of theology should be investigated, and to what limit? Only aspects within our grasp, and only to the limit of the experience and capacity of our audience. Just as excess of sound or food injures the hearing or general health, or, if you prefer, as loads that are too heavy injure those who carry them, or as excessive rain harms the soil, we too must guard against the danger that the toughness, so to speak, of our discourses may so oppress and overtax our hearers as actually to impair the powers they had before.

## 4

Yet I am not maintaining that we ought not to be mindful of God at all times—my adversaries, ever ready and quick to attack, need not pounce on me again. It is more important that we should remember God than that we should breathe: indeed, if one may say so, we should do nothing else besides. I am one of those who approve the precept that commands us to "meditate day and night,"[13] to tell of the Lord "evening, and morning, and at noon,"[14] and to "bless the Lord at all times,"[15] or in the words of Moses, "when we lie down, when we rise up, when we walk by the way,"[16] or when we do anything else whatever, and by this mindfulness be molded to purity. So it is not continual remembrance of God I seek to discourage, but continual discussion of theology. I am not opposed either to theology, as if it were a breach of piety, but only to its untimely practice, or to instruction in it, except when this goes to excess. Fullness and surfeit even of honey, for all its goodness, produces vomiting;[17] and "to everything there is a season,"[18] as Solomon and I think, and "what's well's not well if the hour be ill." A flower is completely out of season in winter, a man's clothing is out of place on a woman, a woman's on a man, immoderate laughter[19] is unseemly during mourning, as are tears at a drinking party. Are we then to neglect "the due season" only in the discussion of theology, where observing the proper time is of such supreme importance?

## 5

Certainly not, friends and brethren—I still call you "brethren," though your attitude is not brotherly—do not let us accept such a view. We must not be like fiery, unruly horses, throwing Reason our rider and spitting out the bit of Discretion which so usefully restrains us, and running wide of the turning post.

Let us conduct our debates within our frontiers, and not be carried away to Egypt or dragged off to Assyria. Let us not "sing the song of the Lord in a foreign land,"[20] by which I mean before any and every audience, heathen or Christian, friend or foe, sympathetic or hostile: these keep all too close a watch on us, and they would wish that the spark of our dissensions might become a conflagration; they kindle it, they fan it, by means of its own draught they raise it to the skies, and without our knowing what they are up to, they make it higher than those flames at Babylon which blazed all around.[21] Having no strength in their own teaching, they hunt for it in our weakness, and for this reason like flies settling on wounds, they settle on our misfortunes—or should I say our mistakes? Let us be blind to our doings no longer, and let us not neglect the proprieties in these matters. If we cannot resolve our disputes outright, let us at least make this mutual concession, to utter spiritual truths with the restraint due to them, to discuss holy things in a holy manner, and not to broadcast to profane hearing what is not to be divulged. Do not let us prove that we are less reverent than those who worship demons and venerate obscene tales and objects; they would sooner give their blood than disclose certain words to non-initiates. We must recognize that as in dress, diet, laughter, and deportment there are certain standards of decency, the same is true of utterance and silence, particularly as we pay especial honor to "The Word" among the titles and properties of God. Let even our contentiousness be governed by rules.

## 6

Why do we allow audiences hostile to our subject-matter to listen to discussion of the "generation" and "creation" of God, or of God's "production from non-being," and such dissections, and distinctions, and analyses? Why do we appoint our accusers as our judges? Why do we put swords into our enemies' hands? How, I ask you, will such a discussion be interpreted by the man who subscribes to a creed of adulteries and infanticides, who worships the passions, who is incapable of conceiving of anything higher than the body, who fabricated his own gods only the other day, and gods at that distinguished by their utter vileness? What sort of construction will he put on it? Is he not certain to take it in a crude, obscene, material sense, as is his wont? Will he not appropriate your theology to defend his own gods and passions? If we abuse these terms ourselves, it will be difficult indeed to persuade such people to accept our way of thinking; and if they have a natural inclination "to invent new kinds of evil,"[22]

how could they resist the evil we offer them? This is what our civil war leads to. This is what we achieve by fighting for the Word with greater violence than is pleasing to the Word. We are in the same state as madmen who set fire to their own houses, tear their own children limb from limb, or reject their own parents, regarding them as strangers.

## 7

Once we have removed from our discussions all alien elements, and dispatched the great legion into the herd of swine to rush down into the abyss,[23] the next step to take is to look at ourselves and to smooth the theologian in us, like a statue, into beauty. But first we must consider: what is this disorder of the tongue that leads us to compete in garrulity? What is this alarming disease, this appetite that can never be sated? Why do we keep our hands bound and our tongues armed?

Do we commend hospitality? Do we admire brotherly love, wifely affection, virginity, feeding the poor, singing psalms, nightlong vigils, penitence? Do we mortify the body[24] with fasting? Do we through prayer, take up our abode with God? Do we subordinate the inferior element in us to the better—I mean, the dust[25] to the spirit, as we should if we have returned the right verdict on the alloy of the two which is our nature? Do we make life a meditation of death? Do we establish our mastery over our passions, mindful of the nobility of our second birth? Do we tame our swollen and inflamed tempers? Or our pride which "comes before a fall,"[26] or our unreasonable grief, our crude pleasures, our dirty laughter, our undisciplined eyes, our greedy ears, our immoderate talk, our wandering thoughts, or anything in ourselves which the Evil One can take over from us and use against us, "bringing in death through the windows,"[27] as Scripture has it, meaning through the senses?

No. We do the very opposite: we offer freedom to the passions of others, like kings declaring an amnesty after a victory, on the sole condition that they give their assent to us—and thus rush against God more violently than before; for this discreditable purchase we pay them a dishonorable price, license in exchange for impiety.

## 8

However, since you are so fond of talking and of the dialectic method, I will

address a few questions to you; and "you shall answer,"[28] as the voice speaking through the whirlwind and the clouds said to Job.

Are there "many mansions" in God's house,[29] as you are taught, or only one?

*Many,* you will of course concede, *and not merely one.*

Are all of them to be filled, or only some of them and not others, so that these will be empty and prepared in vain?

*Yes, all of them; nothing which God does is without purpose.*

Could you explain what you understand by this "mansion"? Is it that rest and glory reserved Yonder for the blessed, or is it something other than this?

*No, that is exactly what it is.*

Since we are agreed on this, let us examine a further question. Is there any meaning in the provision of these different mansions, as I maintain, or is there none?

*Certainly there is.*

What is it?

*It is that there are different patterns of life and avocations, and as they lead to different places according to the proportions of faith,[30] we call them "ways."*

Must we travel along all these ways, or only some of them?

*Yes, all of them, if one individual is able; if not, as many as possible; failing that, some of them; failing even that, it is a great thing, at least in my opinion, to follow one way with distinction.*

You have answered the questions correctly. Well now, when you read "there is one road and that a narrow one,"[31] what do the words seem to you to indicate?

*"One," because it is the way of goodness: it is one way even though there are many branches. "Narrow" because of the effort it involves, and because it can be trodden only by few, compared with the numbers of our adversaries, or those who travel by the way of wickedness.*

I agree. Well then, my friend, if this is so, why is it that people like you condemn our doctrine for its alleged "poverty," reject all the other ways, and rush, pushing and shoving, along one way only, the road you think is that of Reason and Study, but I say is of Gossip and Sensationalism? Accept the rebuke of Paul, who makes this bitter reproach when, after enumerating the gifts of the Spirit, he says: "Are all apostles? Are all prophets?"[32] and so on.

Nevertheless, let us grant that you yourself have reached the heights, gone beyond them higher if you like than the clouds, that you have looked on things which are not to be seen, that you have heard "words human lips may not utter,"[33] that, a second Elijah, you have been raised up into the sky;[34] that, a second Moses, you have been judged worthy to see God;[35] that, a second Paul, you have been caught up into heaven.[36] Even so, why do you then try to mold other people into holiness overnight, appoint them theologians, and as it were, breathe learning into them, and thus produce ready-made any number of Councils of ignorant intellectuals? Why do you try to entangle your weaker brethren in your spiders' webs, as if this were some brilliant feat? Why do you stir up wasps' nests against the Faith? Why do you conjure up a crop of dialecticians to attack us, like the Earth-born warriors in the old stories? Why have you gathered together as though you were sweeping up rubbish into a gutter, all the weediest and most effeminate specimens of the male sex, softened them still further with flattery, and thus set up your revolutionary Profanity industry, a shrewd exploitation of their silliness?

Do you continue to speak even after these charges? Can it be that nothing else matters for you, but your tongue must always rule you, and you cannot hold back words that, once conceived, must be delivered? Well, there are plenty of other fields in which you can win fame. Direct your disease there, and you may do good.

## 10

Attack the silence of Pythagoras, or the Orphic beans, or the extraordinary pretentiousness of "Thus spake the Master."[37] Attack Plato's Ideas, and the Re-embodiments and Cycles of our souls, and their Recollections, and those distasteful love-affairs where the soul was the object, but the beautiful body the route. Then there is Epicurus' atheism, or his atoms, or his ideal of Pleasure, unworthy of a philosopher; or Aristotle's mean conception of Providence, his artificial system, his mortal view of the soul, and the human-centered nature of his teaching. Or what about the superciliousness of the Stoics, the greed and vulgarity of the Cynics?

Attack "the Void"—which is full of nonsense, or all the mumbo-jumbo of gods and sacrifices, idols, demons beneficent or malignant, of soothsaying, summoning the gods or the spirits of the dead, and of the influences of the stars.

If, however, you reject these subjects as unworthy of your intellect, being

petty and often refuted, and you wish to move in your own field, and fulfill your ambitions there: here also I will provide you with broad highways. Speculate about the Universe—or Universes, about Matter, the Soul, about Natures (good and evil) endowed with reason, about the Resurrection, the judgment, Reward and Punishment, or about the Sufferings of Christ.[38] In these questions to hit the mark is not useless, to miss it is not dangerous. But of God himself the knowledge we shall have in this life will be little, though soon after it will perhaps be more perfect, in the same Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom be glory for ever and ever.[39] Amen.

## Notes

[1] The headings, though found in the manuscripts, are probably not Gregory's.

[2] Jer 50:31.

[3] 2 Tim 4:3.

[4] 1 Tim 6:20.

[5] 1 Tim 6:4.

[6] Rom 9:28; Is 10:23.

[7] 1 Tim 3:16.

[8] Jer 4:19.

[9] Sir 25:9.

[10] Mt 13:3 and 23.

[11] Ps 46(45):10(11).

[12] Ps 75(74):2(3).

[13] Ps 1:2; Josh 1:8.

[14] Ps 55(54):17(18).

[15] Ps 34(33):1(2).

[16] Deut 6:7.

[17] Cf. Prov 25:16(27).

[18] Sir 3:1.

[19] So the ancient Syriac translation, preserving the correct reading, as against the Greek *geometry*, which makes no sense and is an early textual error. For the phrase, see Or. 11, 5.

[20] Ps 137(136):4.

[21] Cf. Dan 3:20.

[22] Rom 1:30.

[23] Mk 5:9–13; Lk 8:30–33.

[24] 1 Cor 9:27.

[25] Gen 2:7.

[26] Cf. Prov 16:18; Lk 18:14.

[27] Jer 9:21(20).

[28] Job 38:3.

[29] Jn 14:2.

[30] Rom 12:6.

[31] Mt 7:14.

[32] 1 Cor 12:29.

[33] 2 Cor 12:4.

[34] 2(4) Kg 2:11.

[35] Ex 3:2; 19:20; 33:18–23.

[36] 2 Cor 12:2.

[37] Gregory suggests in turn the familiar targets of Christian apologetics, some of which reappear in the next Oration. The mention of Aristotle might surprise. His importance for theology was to become apparent only in the centuries after Gregory, for whom he is the author of the Categories and the one who asserted, in a passage that does not survive, that Providence did not obtain in the world under the Moon.

[38] All these are themes treated by Origen in his *De Principiis*. By “the Sufferings of Christ” Gregory seems to mean sufferings in some other world or worlds. He does not have in mind theories of the atonement.

[39] Rev 1:6.

# ORATION 28
# On the Doctrine of God

## *The Second Theological Oration*

### 1

Last time we used theology to cleanse the theologian. We glanced at his character, his audience, the occasion and range of his theorizing. We saw that his character should be undimmed, making for a perception of light by light; that his audience should be serious-minded, to ensure that the word shall be no sterile sowing in sterile ground;[1] that the right occasion is when we own an inner stillness away from the outward whirl, avoiding all fitful checks to the spirit; and that the range should be that of our God-given capacity. These truths were established last time and so we broke up our fallow-soil with God's furrows, not wanting to sow on thorns;[2] we leveled off the face of the ground,[3] impressed and impressing it with Scripture's stamp. Well now let us go forward to discuss the doctrine of God, dedicating our sermon to our sermon's subjects, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, that the Father may approve, the Son aid, and the Holy Spirit inspire it—or rather that the single Godhead's single radiance, by mysterious paradox one in its distinctions and distinct in its connectedness, may enlighten it.

### 2

I eagerly ascend the mount[4]—or, to speak truer, ascend in eager hope matched with anxiety for my frailty—that I may enter the cloud[5] and company with God (for such is God's bidding).[6] Is any an Aaron? He shall come up with me.[7] He shall stand hard by, should he be willing to wait, if need be, outside the cloud. Is any a Nadab, an Abihu, or an elder? He too shall ascend, but stand further off,[8] his place matching his purity. Is any of the crowd, unfit, as they are, for so sublime contemplation? Utterly unhallowed?—let him not come near, it is dangerous.[9] Duly prepared?—let him abide below. He shall hear but the voice and the trumpet, true religion's outer expressions; he shall see the mount in smoke with its lightning-flashes,[10] warning and wonder to those who cannot

ascend it. Is any an evil, untamed beast, quite impervious to thoughts of contemplation and divinity? He shall not lurk in the woods, baneful and harmful, to pounce out on some truth or utterance and rend “wholesome thoughts”[11] with his abuse. No, he shall stand still further off. He shall quit the mount or “be stoned”[12] and “crushed”[13]—an evil death for an evil man,[14] seeing that the brutish find real and solid arguments to be stones. Is he a leopard? He shall die spots and all.[15] A predatory, roaring lion, seeking our souls[16] or our phrases for meat? A swine, trampling truth’s fair, clear pearls?[17] A wolf, Arabian[18]—and foreign, or even sharper than these are at chop-logic? A fox, a shifty, treacherous soul, matching its form to the hour’s need, fed off stinking corpses or, avoiding the big ones, off little vineyards?[19] Some other carnivore, rejected by the Law, unclean, useless as food?[20] Our sermon leaves these behind, meaning to be engraved on solid tables of stone[21] and on both sides of these because the Law has an obvious and a hidden aspect. The obvious belongs to the crowd waiting below, the hidden to thefew who attain the height.

## 3

What experience of this have I had, you friends of truth, her initiates, her lovers as I am? I was running with a mind to see God and so it was that I ascended the mount. I penetrated the cloud, became enclosed in it, detached from matter and material things and concentrated, so far as might be, in myself. But when I directed my gaze I scarcely saw the averted figure of God, and this whilst sheltering in the rock,[22] God the Word incarnate for us.[23] Peering in I saw not the nature prime, inviolate, self-apprehended (by “self” I mean the Trinity), the nature as it all abides within the first veil and is hidden by the Cherubim,[24] but as it reaches us at its furthest remove from God, being, so far as I can understand, the grandeur, or as divine David calls it the “majesty”[25] inherent in the created things he has brought forth and governs. All these indications of himself that he has left behind him are God’s “averted figure.”[26] They are, as it were, shadowy reflections of the Sun in water, reflections which display to eyes too weak, because too impotent to gaze at it, the Sun overmastering perception in the purity of its light. Thus and thus only, can you speak of God, be you Moses, Pharaoh’s “God,”[27] had you reached, like Paul, the third heaven and heard ineffable mysteries,[28] had you even transcended it, deemed worthy of an angel’s or an archangel’s station and rank. For were a thing all heavenly, all super-celestial

even, far more sublime in nature than ourselves, far nearer God, its remoteness from him and from his perfect apprehension is much greater than its superiority to our low, heavy compound.

4

So we must begin again with this in mind. To know God is hard, to describe him impossible, as a pagan philosopher[29] taught—subtly suggesting, I think, by the word "difficult" his own apprehension, yet avoiding our test of it by claiming it was impossible to describe. No—to tell of God is not possible, so my argument runs, but to know him is even less possible. For language may show the known if not adequately, at least faintly, to a person not totally deaf and dull of mind. But mentally to grasp so great a matter is utterly beyond real possibility even so far as the very elevated and devout are concerned, never mind slack and sinking souls. This truth applies to every creature born, to all beings whose view of reality is blocked by this gloom, this gross portion of flesh. Whether higher, incorporeal natures can grasp it, I do not know. They may, perhaps, through their proximity to God and their illumination by light in its fullness know God if not with total clarity, at least more completely, more distinctly than we do, their degree of clarity varying proportionately with their rank.

5

But enough of this! For our part, not only does God's peace pass all thought and understanding[30] with all the things stored up in promise for the righteous—things unseen by the eye, unheard by the ear,[31] unthought, or at least but glimpsed by the mind—but so does exact knowledge of the creation as well. You can be sure that we possess but the bare outline of the creation when you hear the words: "I shall see the heavens, the works of thy fingers, the Moon and the Stars"[32] and the fixed order they contain. He does not see them now, but there is a time when he shall see them. Yes, far more than these things does their transcendent cause, the incomprehensible and boundless nature pass understanding. I mean understanding what that nature is, not understanding that it exists. Our preaching is not vain, our faith empty;[33] it is not *that* doctrine we are propounding. Do not take our frankness as ground for atheistic caviling and exalt yourselves over against us for acknowledging our ignorance. Conviction, you see, of a thing's existence is quite different from knowledge of *what* it is.

## 6

That God, the creative and sustaining cause of all, exists, sight and instinctive law inform us—sight, which lights upon things seen as nobly fixed in their courses, borne along in, so to say, motionless movement; instinctive law, which infers their author through the things seen in their orderliness. How could this universe have had foundation or constitution, unless God gave all things being and sustains them? No one seeing a beautifully elaborated lyre with its harmonious, orderly arrangement, and hearing the lyre's music will fail to form a notion of its craftsman-player, to recur to him in thought though ignorant of him by sight. In this way the creative power, which moves and safeguards its objects, is clear to us, though it be not grasped by the understanding. Anyone who refuses to progress this far in following instinctive proofs must be very wanting in judgment. But still, whatever we imagined or figured to ourselves or reason delineated is not the reality of God. If anyone ever did compass this in any degree of thought, where is the proof? Who was it who reached this ultimate in wisdom? Who was it who was sometime counted worthy of so great a gift? Who was it who thus opened his mind's mouth[34] and drew in the Spirit, that by the Spirit which searches out and knows God's depths[35] he might comprehend God, might stand in no need of further progress as owning already the ultimate object of desire towards which speeds all a lofty soul's thought and conduct?

## 7

What can your conception of the divine be, if you rely on all the methods of deductive argument? To what conclusion will closely-scrutinized argument bring you, you most rational of theologians, who boast over infinity? Is it corporeal? How then can it be boundless, limitless, formless, impalpable, invisible? Can bodies be such? The arrogance of it! This is not the nature of bodies. Or is it corporeal but without these properties? The grossness of it, to say that deity has no properties superior to ours! How could it be worth worship were it bounded? How could it escape elemental composition and disintegration or even total dissolution? For composition is cause of conflict, conflict of division, division of dissolution. But dissolution is utterly alien to God the prime nature. So no dissolution means no division; no division means no conflict; no conflict means no composition, and hence no body involving composition. The reasonings stand so, mounting from consequences to first conditions.

## 8

How, again, can justice be done to the scriptural fact that God pervades and fills the universe ("'Do not I fill heaven and earth?' says the Lord,"[36] and, "The spirit of the Lord fills the world"[37]) if part of it limits him and part of it is limited by him? It cannot, for he must either occupy a complete vacuum and our universe vanish—involving the blasphemy that God has been rendered corporeal and does not possess the universe he made; or his body must be contained by bodies—which is impossible; or he must be knit through them as a contrasted strand, like liquids in mixture, parting some, parted by others—which is a more absurd old wives' tale[38] than even Epicurus' atoms. It follows, then, that talk of God's body has no solid body to it and must collapse. What if we call God "immaterial," the fifth element[39] envisaged by some, borne along the circular drift? Let us assume that he is some immaterial, fifth body, incorporeal, if they want it so to suit their free-drifting, self-constructing argument—I will not quarrel over the point. What place will he have in the moving drift of things—leaving out of account the blasphemy of identifying the creatures' motion with their creator's, the mover's (if they will concede the term) with that of the moved? What moves this fifth element? What moves the whole? What moves that which moves the whole? and so on *ad infinitum*. Must not this moving fifth element be in space? Suppose that they call it something other than the fifth element, an angelic body, say. What grounds have they for asserting that angels are bodies? What are these bodies? How far will God transcend angels who are his ministers?[40] If supra-angelic, a countless swarm of bodies will be fetched in, an abyss of nonsense with no halting place.

## 9

So we have proved that God is not a body. No divinely inspired[41] teacher has asserted or accepted that idea; the verdict of our fold[42] is against it. He can only be incorporeal. But the term "incorporeal," though granted, does not give an all-embracing revelation of God's essential being. The same is true of "ingenerate," "unoriginate," "immutable," and "immortal," indeed of all attributes applied, or referred, to God. For what has the fact of owning no beginning, of freedom from change, from limitation, to do with his real, fundamental nature? No, the full reality is left to be grasped, philosophically treated, and scrutinized by a more

advanced theorist of God. Just as predicating “is body” or “is begotten” of something or other where these predicates are applicable is not enough clearly to set out the thing but you must also, if an object of knowledge is to be displayed with adequate clarity, give the predicates their subject; (men, cows, and horses, you see are “corporeal,” “begotten,” and “mortal”) so, in the same way, an inquirer into the nature of a real being cannot stop short at saying what it is *not* but must add to his denials a positive affirmation (and how much easier it is to take in a single thing than to run the full gamut of particular negations!). The point of this is that comprehension of the object of knowledge should be effected both by negation of what the thing is not and also by positive assertion of what it is. A person who tells you what God is not but fails to tell you what he is, is rather like someone who, asked what twice five are, answers “not two, not three, not four, not five, not twenty, not thirty, no number, in short, under ten or over ten.” He does not deny it *is* ten, but he is also not settling the questioner’s mind with a firm answer. It is much simpler, much briefer, to indicate all that something is *not* by indicating what it *is*, than to reveal what it *is* by denying what it is *not*.

This is all common sense, surely, [10] but now that we have proved deity incorporeal, we shall take the examination a stage further. The problem is this: is deity located in space or not? If it is not, then your shrewd critic might ask how it can even exist at all. Granted that what does not exist has no spatial location, it may well be the case that what has no spatial location does not exist. But if deity is spatially located there are two possible consequences: either the universe contains it, or it is located above the universe. Taking the first alternative then, it is either contained in a part of the universe or the whole of it. Supposing deity is contained in a part of the universe, it will be delimited by something smaller; if in the whole, by something larger, quite different in relative scale, I mean, as between deity inside and the surrounding universe, granted the universe is going to be contained by the universe and all spatial location to have its bounding line. These consequences follow the hypothesis that the universe contains God. Again, where was it before the universe was created? This produces a considerable problem, you see. If, on the other hand, deity is located above the universe, what is the dividing line between it and the universe? Where is this higher place? How are higher and lower levels to be recognized, where there is no dividing line between to separate them? There will have, surely, to be something in between, something to bound the universe off from what lies above it. In that case this something in between must have the very spatial location we

rejected. I do not now insist upon the fact that deity must be delimited if it be mentally comprehended, for comprehension is one form of delimitation.

11

Why have I made this digression, too labored, I dare say, for the general ear but in tune with the prevalent fashion in discussions, a fashion which despises noble simplicity and substitutes tortuous conundrums? I did it to make the tree known by its fruits,[43] to make the darkness which activates dogmas like these, I mean, known by the obscurity of their expression. I did not do it to gain a reputation for startling oratory or extraordinary wisdom as a marvelous Daniel for "showing hard sentences and dissolving doubts."[44] No, I wanted to make plain the point my sermon began with, which was this: the incomprehensibility of deity to the human mind and its totally unimaginable grandeur. Not that deity resents our knowledge: resentment is a far cry from the divine nature, serene as it is, uniquely and properly "good," especially resentment of its most prized creation. What can mean more to the Word than thinking beings, since their very existence is an act of supreme goodness? It is not that he treasures his own fullness of glory, keeping his majesty costly by inaccessibility. It would be utterly dishonest, utterly out of character not merely for God but for an ordinary good man with anything of a proper conscience about him to get himself the senior place by keeping others out.

12

There may be other reasons known to those nearer God, "eyewitnesses and spectators of his unsearchable judgments,"[45] beings, if such there are, of so high excellence that they walk, as Scripture has it, "in the footsteps of the abyss."[46] Yet so far as we have understood it, we with our limited gifts for hard speculation, a possible reason is to avoid a too ready loss of the lightly gained. What is gained by effort is usually kept; what is lightly gained is quickly spurned because it can be gained anew. So for men of sense at least, the scarceness of some benefit is itself of benefit, saving us, perhaps, from sharing Lucifer's fate of falling[47] into stubborn disobedience against the Lord Almighty[48] as a result of taking in the light in its fullness (the most wretched of all falls which pride precedes!)[49] and perhaps so that those who have in this world been cleansed, may look forward in patience to some greater prize for the brilliant labors of

their lives. That may be the reason this corporeal gloom stands barrier between us and God like the cloud of old time between Hebrews and Egyptians,[50] being, it may be, too, the "darkness which he made his hiding-place,"[51] meaning our grossness, through which few but briefly peer. Let those whose business it is discuss the matter, let them take their philosophical investigation as high as they can. Yet we "prisoners of the earth,"[52] in divine Jeremiah's phrase, pent in this gross portion of flesh, know this: you cannot cross your own shadow however much you haste—it is always exactly ahead of your grasp. Sight cannot approach its objects without the medium of light and atmosphere; fish cannot swim out of water; and no more can embodied beings keep incorporeal company with things ideal. Some corporeal factor of ours will always intrude itself, even if the mind be most fully detached from the visible world and at its most recollected when it attempts to engage with its invisible kin. Here is your proof.

## 13

"Spirit,"[53] "fire,"[54] and "light,"[55] "love,"[56] "wisdom,"[57] and "righteousness,"[58] "mind,"[59] and "reason"[60] and so forth, are titles of the prime reality, are they not? Can you think of wind without movement and dispersal? Of fire without matter, with no rising motion, no color and shape of its own? Or light unmixed with atmosphere, detached from what shines to give it birth, so to say? What of mind? Something else contains it, surely; its thoughts, silent or uttered, are movements. How can you think of reason other than as our inner discourse, unspoken or expressed—I shrink from saying "dissolved"? As for wisdom, how can you think of it except as a state involved in investigations human or divine? Justice and love are commended dispositions, surely, the opposites of injustice and hate, now intense, now slack, now present, now absent; in short they make us and change us, as complexions do our bodies. Or must we abstract, using the words to take, if we can, a view of deity in the absolute, making partial images yield some mental picture? Then what scheme will they yield, which is not just themselves? How can the simple, unpicturable reality be all these images and each in its entirety? This way our mind tires of getting past bodily conditions and companying with things sheerly incorporeal, and meanwhile it gazes in impotence at what lies beyond its powers. Because though every thinking being longs for God, the First Cause, it is powerless, for the reasons I have given, to grasp him. Tired with the yearning it chafes at the bit and, careless of the cost, it tries a second tack. Either it looks at things visible and makes of these a god—a

gross mistake, for what visible thing is more sublime, more godlike, than its observer, and how more so, that it should be the object, he the subject, of worship?—or else it discovers God through the beauty and order of things seen, using sight as a guide to what transcends sight without losin God through the grandeur of what it sees.

14

So it comes about that some men have reverenced the Sun, others the Moon, others the host of stars, others again include the heaven itself. To these they ascribe a universal sway in virtue of their speed and type of motion. Some men have worshipped the elements—earth, water, air, and fire—because of their necessity to the maintenance of human life. Others again have taken as patronal deities whatever objects of special beauty happened to strike their sight. There are yet others, more emotional, more sensual, who have paid divine reverence to pictures and statues. At first these were of their kin; men honored the departed with memorials. Later they were of strangers too. Men remote from these strangers in time and space and ignorant of the primal nature, followed the traditional rule of honoring them. They took that honoring for right and essential, when the practice had been hardened by time into an established law. Flatterers of power too, surely, who praised and admired physical strength and beauty, in course of time made a god of the man honored, fastening on some tale to aid the deception.

15

Men of worse passions even made gods of their emotions, or gave divine honors to anger, murder, lust, drunkenness, and I know not what else of the same kind. They found here no fair, no just excuse for their own sins. Some gods they unleashed in the world, others they hid underground (their only wise act!), and yet others they took up to heaven. What a ludicrous allocation of territory! Next, error took its own sweet way and they gave each counterfeit god or devil a name. They put up statues whose very costliness made them bait, and periodically saw fit to honor them with reeking blood and with vile acts of frenzied human slaughter. Such honors suited such gods. They insulted themselves; they took God’s glory and attached it to monstrous animals, four-footed beasts and reptiles,[61] the vilest and most ludicrous of their kind. They make it hard to tell

which was the more contemptible, the worshippers or the worshipped; perhaps the worshippers by far, since they as rational beings, recipients of God's grace, chose their inferior for patron and better. This was the Evil One's trick, to use good for a bad end, as so many of his schemes do. He caught at their unguided longing to search for God, meaning to divert power to himself and cheat that desire of theirs—it was like taking a blind man's hand when he is eager to find the road. He pushed them headlong down a variety of cliffs, but the pieces he had made of them went into just one pit of death and destruction.

## 16

This was their fate. But reason took us up in our desire for God, in our refusal to travel without guide or helmsman. Reason looked on the visible world, lighted on things primeval yet did not make us stop at these (for reason will grant no superiority to things as much objects of sense as we are) but leads us on through them to what transcends them, the very means of their continued existence. For what gave order to things heavenly and earthly and to all that pass through air and live under water, and more than that to what came before them—I mean heaven, earth, air, and the element of water themselves? Who combined these elements and divided them out? What common factors have they of nature and purpose? I commend the man, non-Christian though he was,[62] who asked: "What set these elements in motion and leads their ceaseless, unimpeded flow?" It was surely their designer, who implants in all things reason whereby the universe is conducted and carried along. And who is their designer? Surely he who made them and brought them into existence. Great power like this cannot be ascribed to chance. Supposing chance created them, what gave them order? Granting this possibility too, if you like, to chance, what preserves and guards them in the conditions of their first constitution? Chance again, or something else? Clearly something beyond chance. What can this "something" be if not God? Thus God-derived reason, bound up, connected, with the whole of nature, man's most ancient law, has led us up from things of sight to God. Let us make a fresh start here.

## 17

No one has yet discovered or ever shall discover what God is in his nature and essence. As for a discovery some time in the future, let those who have a mind to

it research and speculate. The discovery will take place, so my reason tells me, when this God-like, divine thing, I mean our mind and reason, mingles with its kin, when the copy returns to the pattern it now longs after. This seems to me to be the meaning of the great dictum that we shall, in time to come, "know even as we are known."[63] But for the present what reaches us is a scant emanation, as it were a small beam from a great light[64]—which means that anyone who "knew" God or whose "knowledge" of him has been attested in the Bible, had a manifestly more brilliant knowledge than others not equally illuminated. This superiority was reckoned knowledge in the full sense, not because it really was so, but by the contrast of relative strengths.

18

It is for this reason that Enosh "hoped to invoke the Lord."[65] His accomplishment consisted in hoping not, mark you, for knowledge but invocation of the Lord. Enoch was "transferred"[66]—yes, but it is quite unclear whether this was a consequence or a pre-condition of his comprehending God's nature. Noah's distinction lay in his being "well-pleasing" to God,[67] and to him was entrusted the task of rescuing the whole world, or rather the world's elements, from the waters, when he escaped the deluge in a small boat.[68] Abraham, mighty patriarch that he was, was "justified by faith."[69] The sacrifice he offered was unusual in its foreshadowing of the great one to come.[70] He saw God but not as God. No, he gave him food as man and was commended because his reverence matched his comprehension.[71] Jacob dreamed of a lofty ladder and of angels ascending it.[72] His anointing a pillar had a hidden meaning perhaps,[73] a revelation of the rock anointed for our sakes.[74] He gave a place the name "vision of God" in honor of what he dreamed.[75] He wrestled as man with God[76]—whatever "wrestling" between God and man may be (the comparison of human excellence with God, perhaps?)—and bore on his body the tokens of the wrestling, tokens which displayed a worsting of the created nature. As prize for his true religion he earned a change of name. From being called "Jacob" he was called by the great and precious title "Israel."[77] Yet neither he, nor any other after him to this day from the twelve tribes, whose Father he was, could boast this: that he had taken in the nature, the total vision, of God.

19

For Elijah, so the narrative tells us, it was not the mighty wind or the fire or the earthquake but a light breeze which gave outline to the presence, but not the nature, of God.[78] Elijah? Yes, the man whose more than human devotion to duty was manifested by a chariot of fire bearing him up to heaven.[79] Must you not show respect for Manoah, the Old Testament judge, and Peter, the New Testament disciple: Manoah was overwhelmed by the sight of God in a vision? "Wife," he said, "we are lost, we have seen God"[80]—meaning by this that even a vision of God is too much for men let alone God's nature. Peter would not let the apparition of Christ on board the boat and so bade him depart,[81] despite the fact that Peter was more fervent than the rest for knowledge of Christ. For this fervor he was blessed, and entrusted with the greatest powers.[82] What will you say of Isaiah, or Ezekiel, eyewitness of things most mighty, and of the rest of the prophets? Isaiah saw the Lord Sabaoth seated on his throne of glory, surrounded, enveloped, by six-winged seraphim praising him. Isaiah himself was purged by the coal and equipped for his prophetic function.[83] Ezekiel describes God's chariot of cherubim, the throne above them, and beyond the throne the firmament. He describes the visionary figure he saw in the firmament, certain sounds, movements, and actions too.[84] Was this a day-time appearance, the kind seen only by saints? A veridical vision of the night? An impression upon the reasoning mind of companying with future, as though they were present, realities? Some other mysterious form of prophecy? I cannot say. The God of the prophets—he knows; so do the prophetically inspired. But none of those I talk of, nor any other of their sort, stood within the essential "basis," as Scripture has it, "of the Lord."[85] None saw, none told, of God's nature.

## 20

Had Paul been able to express the experiences gained from the third heaven,[86] and his progress, ascent, or assumption to it, we should, perhaps, have known more about God—if this really was the secret meaning of his rapture. But since they were ineffable, let them have the tribute of our silence. Let us give this much attention to Paul when he says: "We know in part and we prophesy in part."[87] This and the like is the confession of one who is no mere layman in knowledge, of one who threatens to give proof of Christ speaking in him,[88] of a great champion and teacher of truth. Yet he counts all knowledge in this world as nothing more than "puzzling reflections in mirrors,"[89] because it has its basis in

small-scale images of reality. I hope I may not seem to some of you to be laboring the matter if I say that it may be this that the Word himself was hinting at, when he said that some things, which could not be borne, would at some future time, be borne and made plain.[90] Perhaps it is those things which John, the Word's messenger and great voice of truth, affirmed to be beyond the present world's power to contain.[91]

21

All truth, all philosophy, to be sure, is obscure, hard to trace out. It is like employing a small tool on big constructions, if we use human wisdom in the hunt for knowledge of reality. We do not abandon the senses, they go with us, when we look at supra-sensible realities. But by these same senses we are perplexed and led astray. We cannot get nearer the truth by meeting things in their naked reality with naked intellect. Our minds cannot receive direct and sure impressions. Now theology is fuller, and so harder, with more counter-arguments, tougher solutions, than other philosophy. Every slightest objection bars, hinders, the course of the argument, and checks its progress. It is like applying the reins suddenly to galloping horses, making them veer round with the surprise of the shock. So it was with Solomon, the superior of his predecessors and contemporaries in education,[92] gifted by God with breadth of heart and an expanse of vision ampler than the sand.[93] The more he entered into profundities, the more his mind reeled. He made it a goal of his wisdom to discover just how far off it was.[94] Paul tries to get there—I do not mean to God's nature (that he knew to be quite impossible) but only to God's judgments. Paul found no way through, no stopping-place in his climb, since intellectual curiosity has no clear limit and there is always some truth left to dawn on us. The marvel of it all—I share his feelings as he closes his argument with impassioned wonder at the sort of things he calls "the wealth and depth of God"[95] in acknowledgement of the incomprehensibility of God's judgments. His language is almost the same as David used. David at one point calls God's judgments a "great abyss" fathomless by sense;[96] at another point he says that the knowledge even of his own make-up was "too wonderful" for him, "too excellent" for him "to be able to grasp."[97]

22

If, he says, I discount the rest to look at myself, the whole of my nature and construction as a man, I ask what combination of forces sets us going.[98] In what way was the immortal mixed in with the mortal? How do I drift down, yet am borne up? What causes the soul's instability? Why does the soul give life, yet have its share of pain? What makes the mind both confined and boundless, both at home in us and touring the universe in rapid, flowing course?[99] In what way is mind conveyed and communicated by speech? How does it go through the air and enter along with objects? What makes it share in sense-perception, whilst isolating itself from sense-perception? There are questions still more basic than these. What was the first stage in the process of molding and bringing us together in nature's workshop? What is the final stage of formative development? What is the urge to get and provide food? What is the instinct which brings us to the first springs and materials of life? What makes food nourishment for the body and speech for the soul? What is nature's spell, binding parents and children together? What goes to make stable variations of appearance, when an infinitely large number of special factors is involved? How does it come about that the same living thing is both mortal and immortal? Changing its state, it dies; giving birth makes it immortal. Now it goes away, now it comes back in again, channeled like a constant, flowing river. There are many more aspects you can reflect on, facts about our limbs and parts, about their mutual adaptation, about how they are coordinated and differentiated with a view to practical utility combined with beauty, about how they are dove-tailed together, how they are parted yet function as one, how some act as containers of others—and all this by an in-built condition of their nature. There are many facts about speech and hearing, how sounds are produced through the vocal organs and received by the ears, how sounds and ears are knit together by the mprinted impulse transmitted by the intervening air. There are many facts about sight and its mysterious communion with objects. It is set going along with, and only by, the will. Sight is in the same case with mind, for it joins its objects with just the same speed as does the mind its thoughts. There are many facts about the rest of the senses, which act as receivers of external impressions unseen by the eye of reason. There are many facts about rest in sleep, about our imagination at work in dreams, about memory and recollection, about calculation, anger and desire—to be brief, about all that runs the affairs of this little world called Man.

Would you like me to enumerate the points at which animals differ from us and from one another, differences in natural constitution, production and diet, differences in habitat, behavior and social structure, so to say? What makes some animals gregarious, others solitary? Some eat grass, others are carnivorous. Some are fierce, others gentle. Some are friendly and domesticated, others wild and free. Some come quite close to what one might call reason and learning-ability, others are totally devoid of these capacities. They vary in the number of their senses, in their powers of movement. Some are very swift, others very gross. Some have a superiority in size and beauty or in one of these qualities; others are minute or hideous or both at once. Some have strength, others are weak. Some make a quick response to attack, others are treacherous and not to be trusted. Some you must watch out for, others you need not. Some like work and can cope, others are lazy and do not look ahead. Why should all this be? And there are questions prior to these. What makes some animals crawl and others go upright? Why are some attached to a habitat, others amphibious? Why do some take pride in their appearance, others shun adornment? Why do some have mates, others not? Why are some in control of their appetites, others not? What makes some animals fertile, others have few offspring? Why are some long-lived, others short-lived? To argue it through in detail would tire us out.

## 24

Look at fish too. They glide through the water, flying, you might say, under the liquid element. They absorb in water their own special atmosphere, dangerous to us as ours is to them. In behavior and temperament, in the way they couple and produce offspring, in their range of size and beauty, in the way they congregate in particular habitats and roam in migration, here they have almost as many special characteristics as land animals. With these they have many features in common, as well as opposed characteristics of their own, both in their appearance and in their names. Look, again, at the types of birds, with the manifold varieties of design and color all of them, including song-birds, possess. How are we to account for their music, and where did they get it? Who puts a sounding-board in the cicada’s chest with the chirping songs it makes in the branches? Whenever the Sun sets them going they make mid-day music, stirring the groves and giving the traveler an escort of sound. Who wove the web of song for the swan, when it spreads out its wings to the breeze, turning its hissing into melody? I forebear to speak of all the unreal and artificially induced vocal

noises. How comes it that the pretentious Median peacock is so proud, so fond of admiration for his conscious beauty, that he shows off to his hens or on sight of an approaching male? He lifts up his neck, fans out his plumage and gives his admirers a stage-show of beauty as he struts about. Then again Holy Scripture shows admiration for feminine skill at weaving cloth. “Who,” it says, “gave to women skill at weaving cloth and knowledge of embroidery?”[100] This faculty belongs to a living, thinking being, one with more wisdom than any other and on the way to being something heavenly.

## 25

But, I beg you, admire the instinctive intelligence of unthinking beings and present your explanations. How is it that birds make rocks, trees and roofs their bowers, equipped to be secure and handsome as the nurslings require? Where do bees and spiders get the ingenious industry that makes bees devise honeycombs which hold together with hexagonal, matching cavities, made elaborately firm by a partition and by the subtlety of alternate straight lines and angles, in hives too dark for them to see the structure of the comb? How are spiders able to weave complex webs with such light and almost ethereal threads of manifold extension, threads you cannot see the ends of, to make precious homes as well as hunting-grounds for weaker prey? Could any Euclid copy these threads, investigating them with non-existent lines and flagging in his proofs? Could a Palamedes have produced the tactical movements and formations of cranes, which move, so we are told, through the same drills without breaking rank, in intricate flight-patterns? Did they have any kind of Phidias, Zeuxis, or Polygnotus, any Parrhasius or Aglaophon with science enough to draw or sculpt their extravagance of beauty? Did they have their Daedalus with that superbly beautiful bridal-gift he wrought, his “Chorus of Knossus,” or his Cretan labyrinth “so hard to travel, so hard to unravel,” to use the poetic phrase, and cunningly devised to run so frequently into itself? I forebear mentioning ants with their stores and stewards, their treasures of good in match with the season, and all the rest we know to be on record as to their routes, their leaders, and the orderliness found in their works.

## 26

If you have understood the intelligence at work here and can explain it, turn your

attention to the different kinds of plants, to the artistry displayed in their foliage, affording at once the maximum of pleasure to the eyes and of advantage to their fruit. Consider too the rich variety, the lavish abundance of fruits, the special beauty of the particularly important kinds. Examine the potentialities the juices of their roots and the scents their flowers have, not just the pleasant but the medically useful ones too, with their charming qualities of color. Their value shines through clearer than gems, since nature has made a sort of open banquet and served you with all you need to live and enjoy life. The purpose of this is to make you recognize God at least from the benefits you receive, and more conscious of your position if you lack them. Leave here and range over mother earth's length and breadth, her bosom of sea bound round by land, her noble groves and rivers. Traverse her abundant, ever-flowing fountains of cool drinking-water above ground, besides all those which flow underground. Under caverns these flow, till forced out by the pressure of the wind, their temperature raised in the vehemence of the struggling-match, they burst out at slight opportunity. This way they provide us all over the world with the hot baths we need, and, through the force of the contrast they make, with a free, natural corrective. Tell me the cause of all this, explain the nature of this spontaneous fabric, as commendable in its details as in their relationship. What makes the world stand steadfast? On what does it ride, what actually supports it, and on what does that support rest? Reason has no explanation of what upholds the world except the will of God. And again, how comes it that part of the earth has been elevated to make mountain peaks, part settled into plains, in this variety of shapes? What causes it to have its gradual alternations, which make for more unstinting usefulness and render it pleasanter by varety? Part of the earth is apportioned for habitation, part—the whole area consecrated as mountain heights—is unoccupied, and sundered from one another they come to different boundaries. Is not this the clearest mark of God's mighty hand at work?

## 27

As for the sea, if I had felt no wonder at its size, I should have felt it for its stillness, at the way it stands free within its proper limits.[101] If its stillness had not moved my admiration, its size must have done. Since both aspects move me, I shall praise the power involved in both. What binding force brought the sea together? What causes it to swell yet stay in position, as if in awe of the land its neighbor? How can it take in all rivers and stay the same (how can I put it?)

through sheer excess of quantity?[102] Why does so great an element have sand as its frontier?[103] Can natural philosophers, with their futile cleverness, give any account of it, when they actually take the sea's vast measurements with pint-pots of their own ideas? Or shall I give you the short answer from Scripture, the one more credible, more real, than their long arguments? "He made his command a fence for the face of the waters."[104] This command is what binds the elemental water. What makes it carry the sailorman in his little boat with a little wind—do you not find it a marvelous sight, does not your mind stand amazed at it?—to bind land and sea with business and commerce and unify for man such very different things? What springs do the first springs have? Look for them and see if you, a man, can discover or track one down. Who parted plains and hills with rivers and gave them free course? How do we get a miracle from opposites—from a sea with no outlet and rivers that do not stand still?[105] What feeds the waters, what different kinds of food do they get? Some are nourished with rain, others drink with their roots—if I may use a rich metaphor to describe the richness of God.[106]

## 28

But now leave earth and earthly themes, soar up into the air on the wings of your mind, letting the argument move forward on its path. From here I shall bear you up and on to themes heavenly, heaven itself and what lies above heaven. As for the further stage beyond, words shrink from approaching it; yet approach it they will, so far as they can. Who poured out the air so unstintingly? Its vast riches are not counted out by rank or fortune; they have no frontiers to hold them in; their distribution takes no account of age. No, like the division of the manna, there is enough to go round and all shares are equal.[107] Winged creatures ride on it, the winds have it for their throne. It gives the seasons their timeliness and life to animals—or rather preserves the life in their bodies. It contains our bodies. Speech takes place with its aid. Light and what light makes known are found in it and through it flows the current of sight. Yet see what comes next after air—I cannot yield to air entire dominion over all it is reckoned as owning. What of the "storehouses of the winds,"[108] of the "treasuries of the snow"?[109] Who "gave birth," as Scripture has it, "to the dewdrops"?[110] From whose "womb does the ice come forth"?[111] Who "binds up the water in the clouds"?[112] The miracle of it—that he sets something, whose nature it is to flow, on clouds, that he fixes it

there by his word! Yet he pours out some of it on the face of the whole earth, sprinkling it to all alike in due season.[113] He does not unleash the entire stock of water—the cleansing of Noah's era was enough, and God most true does not forget his own covenant.[114] He does not hold back, making us need a second Elijah to end the drought.[115] "If he closes heaven," Scripture says, "who will open it?"[116] If he opens the sluices,[117] who will shut them? Who could endure extremes of drought and deluge, should God fail to control the whole universe by his checks and balances?[118]You philosopher, you thunder from the ground, you lack even the shine a few sparks of truth might give you. What explanation will you give me of lightning and thunder? Will you allege that vapors from the ground make the mass of clouds or that these clouds are made by condensation of air? Will you ascribe the cause of thunder and lightning to the friction and explosion into one another of fine-spun masses of cloud, friction being your cause of lightning, explosion your cause of thunder? But how could moving air be bottled up so as to explode and produce lightning under the pressure of friction? If you have traversed the air and reckoned up all it involves, come now with me, touch heaven and things celestial. Faith rather than reason shall lead us, if that is, you have learned the feebleness of reason to deal with matters quite close at hand and have acquired enough knowledge of reason to recognize things which surpass reason. If so, it follows that you will not be a wholly earthbound thinker, ignorant of your very ignorance.

## 29

Who made heaven rotate and set the stars in order? Can you tell me what heaven and the stars are? You are so high up in the air yet so ignorant of what lies at your feet, so very busy with gaping at the immeasurable realities above you yet so incapable of taking your own measure. Granted you have a grasp of revolutions and orbits, conjunctions and separations, settings and risings, the finer points of degrees (as they are called) and all the other subjects you take such inordinate pride in knowing: this is not a real grasp of the actual things by any means. No, observation of a certain movement is confirmed by further exercise and unifies the observations made by many others. It then thinks out a rule and gets the title "knowledge." This "knowledge" is just like the common awareness of lunar change, in taking its start from visual experience. But if you are very knowledgeable on these subjects and are on the look-out for proper respect, explain the cause of the order and movement. What makes the Sun a

beacon for the whole world to look at, a chorus-leader, as it were, who puts the other stars in the shade by his superior brilliance, outdoing them more than any of them can outdo the others? They vie with him, but he outshines them all, not even allowing their rising with him to be noticed. I have a proof-text here —"handsome as a bridegroom, swift and mighty as a giant."[119] I will not, you see, allow his praises to be sung except by Scripture. So great is the Sun's power that its heat reaches from one end of the world to the other. Nothing can avoid experiencing the Sun; every eye is filled with its light, each body with its heat. The mild temperature and ordered movement of it give warmth without burning. Present to all, it embraces all alike.

## 30

I wonder if you have noticed the important truth that, as a non-Christian writer puts its, "the Sun has the same place in things of sense as God has in things ideal."[120] It gives light to the eyes, just as he does to the mind. The Sun is the noblest thing we can see, God the noblest we can know by thought. But what power set the Sun in motion to start with? What force keeps it moving in orbit by a fixed immovable law? Poets speak reasoned truth not metaphor, when their hymns call the Sun "unflagging," "bringer of life," "life-begetting" and the rest —the Sun, unhalting in its course and its kindnesses. How, above earth, does it fashion day, below it, night—or whatever the right words are to describe how the Sun looks to us? What makes the even imbalance, to use a rather paradoxical phrase, of night and day with their gain and loss? How does he create the orderly arrival, and assign the disciplined departure, of the seasons? Love rules that they embrace, seemly discipline that they part, like dancers; they gradually mingle, stealthily closing in exactly as do days and nights, to avoid giving pain by their novelty. But let the Sun go its way now. Have you knowledge of the Moon's nature, its changes, the measures of its light, its course? Do you know why it presides over night, whilst the Sun rules day: why the Moon gives wild animals boldness, whilst the Sun gets man up for work,[121] doing the most effective service whether high or low in the sky? Do you know what binds the Pleiades or what fences Orion in,[122] as God does who "counts the number of the stars and calls them all by their names"?[123] Do you understand the "different glory"[124] of each and the order of their motion, that I may have grounds to trust you when you use the stars to scheme human schemes and arm the creature against his creator?

## 31

What do you say? Shall we stop our preaching here at matter and objects of sight? Or, since Scripture recognizes the tabernacle of Moses as a symbol for the whole world[125] (the world, I mean, of things "visible and invisible")[126] shall we pass through the first veil,[127] transcending sense, to bend our gaze on holy things,[128] on ideal and heaven transcending reality? But not even this can we see as something free of body, even if it actually be so, since it has "fire" and "wind" for its name or created being. "He makes his angels winds," it says, "and his ministers a flame of fire,"[129] Unless "makes" here means "preserves with the state they were created in" and "wind" and "fire" have the sense of being what is "ideal" and "purifies"—since I am aware that these same epithets are applied to the primal being of God as well. However, so far as we are concerned, angels must be incorporeal or very near it. You see how we become dizzy with the theme and can get no further than the stage of being aware of angels[130] and archangels,[131] thrones, dominions, princedoms, powers,[132] of glowing lights, ascents, intellectual powers or minds, beings of nature pure and unalloyed. Fixed, almost incapable of changing for the worse, they encircle God, the First Cause, in their dance. What words can one use to hymn them? He makes them shine with purest brilliance or each with a different brilliance to match his nature's rank. So strongly do they bear the shape and imprint of God's beauty, that they become in their turn lights, able to give light to others by transmitting the stream that flows from the primal light of God. As ministers of the divine will, powerful with inborn and acquired strength, they range over the universe. They are quickly at hand to all in any place, so eager are they to serve, so agile is their being. Each has under him a different part of the Earth or the universe, which God alone, who defined their ranks, knows. They unify the whole, making all thngs obey the beck and call of him alone who fashioned them. They hymn God's majesty in everlasting contemplation of everlasting glory: not to make God glorious—God, whose fullness supplies all else with excellence, cannot be added to—but to leave beings supreme after God with no service undone. If our hymn has been worthy of its theme, it is the grace of the Trinity, of the Godhead one in three; if desire remains incompletely satisfied, that way too my argument can claim success. For it has been engaged in a struggle to prove that even the nature of beings on the second level is too much for our minds, let alone God's primal and unique, not to say all-transcending, nature.

# Notes

[1] Mt 13:5–6; Mk 4:4–6; Lk 8:6–7.
[2] Jer 4:3.
[3] Is 28:25.
[4] Ex 19:3 and 20; 24:9 and 15.
[5] Ex 24:18.
[6] Cf. Ex 24:12.
[7] Ex 19:24.
[8] Ex 24:1–2, 9–10 and 14; cf. Lev 10:1–3.
[9] Ex 19:12.
[10] Ex 19:16–20.
[11] Titus 2:8.
[12] Ex 19:13.
[13] Lev 11:33.
[14] Mt 21:41.
[15] Jer 13:23.
[16] 1 Pet 5:8.
[17] Mt 7:6.
[18] Hab 1:8 [LXX].
[19] Cant 2:15.
[20] Gen 7:2, 3 and 8; Lev 11; Deut 14:3–20.
[21] Ex 31:18.
[22] Ex 33:21–23.
[23] 1 Cor 10:4; Jn 1:14.
[24] Ex 26:31–33; 36:35–36.
[25] Ps 8:1(2); 111(110):3; 145(144):5 and 12.
[26] Ex 33:22–23.
[27] Ex 7:1.
[28] 2 Cor 12:2–4.
[29] Plato *Timaeus* 28c.
[30] Phil 4:7.
[31] 1 Cor 2:9.
[32] Ps 8:3(4).
[33] 1 Cor 15:14 and 17.
[34] Ps 119(118):131.

35 1 Cor 2:10.

36 Jer 23:24.

37 Wis 1:7.

38 1 Tim 4:7.

39 Supposedly a sort of super-refined “gas” circulating in the upper world.

40 Cf. Heb 1:4 and 14.

41 2 Tim 3:16.

42 Jn 10:16.

43 Mt 7:19–20.

44 Dan 5:12.

45 Rom 11:33.

46 Job 38:16 [LXX].

47 Is 14:12.

48 Job 15:25.

49 Cf. Prov 16:18; Lk 18:14.

50 Ex 14:19–20.

51 Ps 18(17):11(12).

52 Lam 3:34.

53 Jn 4:24.

54 Deut 4:24.

55 1 Jn 1:5.

56 1 Jn 4:16.

57 Job 12:13.

58 Ps 103(102):17; 97(96):2.

59 Is 40:13.

60 Cf. Jn 1:1.

61 Rom 1:23.

62 The author is unknown.

63 1 Cor 13:12.

64 Wis 7:26.

65 Gen 4:26 [LXX].

66 Gen 5:24.

67 Gen 6:9 [LXX].

68 Gen 6:13–19.

69 Gen 15:6; Rom 4:3.

70 Gen 22:2–14.

71 Gen 18:1–15.
72 Gen 28:12.
73 Gen 28:18; 35:14.
74 Cf. Mt 21:42.
75 Gen 32:30–31.
76 Gen 32:24–30.
77 Gen 32:28–30.
78 1(3) Kg 19:11–12.
79 2(4) Kg 2:11.
80 Judg 13:22.
81 Cf. Mk 6:49; Lk 5:8.
82 Mt 16:17–19.
83 Is 6:1–8.
84 Ezek 1:4–28.
85 Jer 23:18 [LXX].
86 2 Cor 12:2–4.
87 1 Cor 13:9
88 2 Cor 13:2–3.
89 1 Cor 13:12.
90 Jn 16:12–13.
91 Jn 21:25.
92 1(3) Kg 3:12; 2 Chr 1:12.
93 1(3) Kg 4(5):29(9).
94 Eccl 7:23–25; 8:17.
95 Rom 11:33.
96 Ps 36(35):6(7).
97 Ps 139(138):6.
98 Ps 139(138):13–16.
99 I.e. in the process of thought.
100 Job 38:36 [LXX].
101 Cf. Job 38:8–11.
102 Cf. Eccl 1:7.
103 Jer 5:22.
104 Job 26:10.
105 Cf. Eccl 1:7.
106 Ezek 31:9 [LXX].

107 Ex 16:14–18.
108 Ps 135(134):7.
109 Job 38:22.
110 Job 38:28.
111 Job 38:29.
112 Job 26:8.
113 Cf. Mt 5:45.
114 Gen 9:8–17.
115 1(3) Kg 17:1–18:45.
116 Job 12:14; 2 Chr 7:13.
117 Mal 3:10.
118 Job 28.25.
119 Cf. Ps 19(18):5(6).
120 Cf. Plato *Republic* 508c. The quotation is not precise.
121 Cf. Ps 104(103):22–23.
122 Job 38:31.
123 Ps 147(146):4.
124 1 Cor 15:41.
125 Cf. Heb 9:1–2 and 24.
126 Col 1:16.
127 Cf. Ex 26:31.
128 Cf. Heb 9:24.
129 Heb 1:7.
130 Cf. Rom 8:38.
131 Cf. 1 Thess 4:16.
132 Col 1:16.

# ORATION 29
# On the Son

## *The Third Theological Oration*

### 1

Yes, these are the replies one can use to put a brake upon this hasty argumentativeness, a hastiness which is dangerous in all matters, but especially in discussions about God. To censure, of course, is a trivial task—anyone so minded can do it quite easily. But to substitute one's own view takes a man of true religion and sound sense. So, come now, let us put our confidence in the Holy Spirit *they* dishonor but *we* worship. Let us bring our convictions about the Godhead—convictions of some significance and standing—into broad daylight, like an offspring of good stock ripe for birth. Not that we have held our peace at other times—here is the one point we become brash and arrogant on—but now we express the truth even more outspokenly, in order that, as Scripture puts it, we may not suffer the condemnation of God's disfavor by balking the issue.[1]

Every speech has two parts to it. One part aims at establishing one's own position; the other refutes the opposing case. This is the method we shall try, expounding our own, before refuting our opponents' arguments. Both parts will be as brief as possible, so that there may be as good a conspectus of our views as provided by the introductory treatise that they have invented, for the deception of simpler or more gullible souls. Besides which we do not want our thoughts to be dissipated through the length of discussion, like water, without a channel to hold it in, running to waste over flat ground.

### 2

The opinions about deity that hold pride of place are three in number: atheism, polytheism, and monotheism. With the first two the children of Greece amused themselves. Let the game go on! Atheism with its lack of a governing principle involves disorder. Polytheism, with a plurality of such principles, involves faction and hence the absence of a governing principle, and this involves disorder again. Both lead to an identical result—lack of order, which, in turn, leads to disintegration, disorder being the prelude to disintegration. Monotheism,

with its single governing principle, is what *we* value—not monotheism defined as the sovereignty of a single person (after all, self-discordant unity can become a plurality) but the single rule produced by equality of nature, harmony of will, identity of action, and the convergence towards their source of what springs from unity—none of which is possible in the case of created nature. The result is that though there is numerical distinction, there is no division in the substance. For this reason, a one eternally[2] changes to a two and stops at three—meaning the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In a serene, non-temporal, incorporeal way, the Father is parent of the "offspring" and originator of the "emanation"—or whatever name one can apply when one has entirely extrapolated from things visible. We shall not venture, as a non-Christian philosopher rashly did, to talk of an "overflowing of goodness," "as though a bowl had overflowed"—these were the plain terms he used in his disquisition on primary and secondary causes.[3] We ought never to introduce the notion of involuntary generation (in the sense of some sort of unrestrained natural secretion), which is completely out of keeping with ideas about the Godhead. This is why we limit ourselves to Christian terms and speak of "the Ingenerate," "the Begotten," and (as God the Word himself does in one passage) "what Proceeds from the Father."[4]

## 3

*So when did these last two originate?*

They transcend "whenness," but if I *must* give a naive answer—when the Father did.

*When was that?*

There has not been a "when" when the Father has not been in existence. This, then, is true of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Put another question and I will answer it.

*Since when has the Son been begotten?*

Since as long as the Father has *not* been begotten.

*Since when has the Spirit been proceeding?*

Since as long as the Son has *not* been proceeding but being begotten in a non-temporal way that transcends explanation. We cannot, though, explain the meaning of "supra-temporal" *and* deliberately keep clear of any suggestion of time. Expressions like "when," "before x," "after y," and "from the beginning" are not free from temporal implications however much we try to wrest them. No, we cannot explain it, except possibly by taking the world-era as the period

coinciding with eternal things, being a period which is not, as “time” is, fragmented and measured by the Sun’s motion.

*How is it, then that these are not co-unoriginate, if they are co-eternal with him?*

Because they are *from* him, though not *after* him. “Being unoriginate” necessarily implies “being eternal,” but “being eternal” does not entail “being unoriginate,” so long as the Father is referred to as origin. So because they have a cause they are not unoriginate. But clearly a cause is not necessarily prior to its effects—the Sun is not prior to its light. Because time is not involved, they are to that extent *unoriginate*—even if you do scare simple souls with the bogey-word; for the sources of time are not subject to time.

## 4

*How, then can the process of begetting not involve subjection to change?*

Because a body is not involved. If corporeal begetting implies subjection to change, an incorporeal one must be free of it. Let me put a question to you in return: how can he be God, if he is a creature? What is created is not God. Not to mention the fact that if “creating” is given a corporeal interpretation, emotion and change are to be found here as well—for instance, time, desire, imagination, thought, hope, distress, risk, failure, and success. All these factors, and more besides, as everybody knows, are involved in creating. I wonder why you do not go the full length of envisaging mating, periods of gestation and risks of miscarriage as necessarily involved if he were to beget at all, or why you do not list the ways in which birds, beasts, and fish produce offspring and set the divine and unutterable generation down as one of these, or else use your new-fangled scheme to get rid of the Son. You are incapable of understanding that one who has a distinctive fleshly birth—what other case of a Virgin Mother of God do you know?—has a different spiritual birth, or rather, one whose being is not the same as ours has a different way of begetting as well.

## 5

*Can anyone be a “father,” without beginning to be one?*

Yes, one who did not begin his existence. What begins to exist begins to be a father. *He* did not later begin to be Father—he did not begin at all. He is “Father” in the true sense, because he is not a son as well. Just as the Son is

“Son” in the true sense, because he is not a father as well. In our case, the word “father” cannot be truly appropriate, because we must be fathers *and* sons—the terms carry equal weight. We also stem from a pair, not a single being, making us be divided and become human beings gradually, and maybe not even human beings of the kind we are intended to be. The ties are dissolved by one side or the other, so that only the relationships remain, bereft of the realities.

*But*, it may be said, *“he begat” and “he has been begotten” can and must bring in the idea of a beginning of this process of generation.*

Why not say then instead, “he has existed as begotten from the beginning,” and so avoid your labored objections with their penchant for time? Will you accuse us of falsifying a Scriptural truth? Is it not clear to everybody that there are plenty of examples of tenses being employed in an opposite sense, especially in Biblical usage? This is true not only of the past or present tense, but of the future as well. For example: “Why did the heathen rage?”[5]—the raging had not yet occurred; and, “They will cross the river on foot”[6]—which means, “they *have* gone through it.” It would be a long task to list all the expressions of this kind on which scholars have bestowed their attention.

## 6

So much for that objection! This next one of theirs is like it in being outrageously provocative.

*Has the Father*, they ask, *begotten the Son voluntarily, or involuntarily?*

They then bind us round with what they think are strong cords, but really are feeble ones.

*If*, they say, *it was involuntary, he was in someone’s power. Who exercised the power? How could God be under someone’s power? But if it was voluntary, the Son is son to a will; so how can he stem from the Father?*

They make the will into a new kind of mother in place of the Father.

First, it is certainly one point in their favor if they say this. It means that they are deserting passivity to take refuge in the will. Volition is not, after all, a passive experience. Secondly, let us take a look at what they put as their strong point. They had best now be grappled with at closer quarters. You who coolly assert what you will, did *you* come into existence as a result of your father’s willing it, or without his will? If without his will, he must have been in someone’s power. What an act of violence! And who exercised that power over him? You cannot answer, “Nature”—nature is also capable of self-control. If it

was voluntary, a few syllables have lost you your father—you are evidently a son of his will, not of your father. Let me pass on to the subject of God and creatures, and address this question of yours to your own intelligence. Did he create the universe voluntarily or under compulsion? If it was under compulsion, then domination and a dominator are involved. If voluntarily, then creatures have been deprived of their God, and you most of all who invent sophisms of this kind. God is walled off from his creation by his will. No, if we are sober, we make a distinction, I think, between "willing" and "a will," between "begetting" (as a participle) and "begetting" (as a noun) between "speaking" and "speech." The participles refer to a subject of motion, the nouns designate the motion itself. What is willed does not *belong* to a will—it is not a necessary concomitant of it. Nor does what is begotten *belong* to a begetting, nor what is heard to an act of speech. They belong instead to the subject who willed, who begat, who speaks. What belongs to God transcends all these cases even. For him begetting may well just be the will to beget—but without anything intervening. If we accept this last proposition without reservation, there will be no superiority of begetting to willing either.

## 7

Do you want me to take the game on to the Father? You make me do rash things like that! The Father is God either voluntarily or involuntarily. Now (if you do not want to be trapped by your own expertise) when, if it was voluntary, did he begin to will it? Not, of course, before he actually was God—there being nothing prior to that. Or is he partly the subject, partly the object of an act of will? In that case, he must be divided. You have a problem: how can he avoid belonging to a will? But if it was involuntary, what forced him into being God? How can he be God, if he is forced, forced into nothing less than being God?

*How, then, has the Son been begotten?*

How has he been created, if, as you say, created he has been? Indeed this is part of the same puzzle.

Perhaps you will answer: *by his will and his Word.*

But your explanation is so far incomplete, for how will and Word can have the power to effect anything remains unexplained—in the case of human beings, after all, they do not.

## 8

How, then has he been begotten? This begetting would be a triviality if it could be understood by you, who have no knowledge of your own genesis and are ashamed to explain in full the limited understanding you have. Do you really think you know it all? It will cost you much effort before you discover the principles involved from conception through formation to delivery, and the linking of soul to body, of intellect to soul and of reason to intellect, and can explain the rest of your makeup—movement, growth, assimilation of food, perception, memory, and recollection and what belongs jointly to soul and body, what separately to one and what involves their interplay. Faculties, after all, whose maturity belongs to a later stage, have principles that accompany the procreative process. Explain these, and even then you are not able to treat of God's begetting. That would be risky. For if you know your own, it by no means follows that you know God's; and unless you know your own, how could you know God's? The heavenly begetting is more incomprehensible than your own, to the same extent that God is harder to trace out than Man. If you make its incomprehensibility a ground for denying the fact, it is high time you ruled out as non-existent a good number of things you do not understand, the chief of which is God himself. However audacious, however enthusiastic you are for futile researches, you cannot explain what *he* is at all. Drop your ideas of flux, division and cleavage, drop the habit of treating the incorporeal nature as if it were a body and you might well get a worthy notion of God's begetting. How has he been begotten?—I re-utter the question with loathing. God's begetting ought to have the tribute of our reverent silence. The important point is for you to learn that he has been begotten. As to the way it happens, we shall not concede that even angels, much less you, know that. Shall I tell you the way? It is a way known only to the begetting Father and the begotten Son. Anything beyod this fact is hidden by a cloud and escapes your dull vision.

## 9

*Well then, he either existed or did not exist when the Father begat him!*

What drivel! That dilemma might have relevance to you and me. Like Levi in Abraham's loins[7] we did have some sort of being, and yet we have *come* into being as well, so that, in a certain fashion, our condition is a product of being and non-being. This is the opposite of primeval matter, which obviously came into existence from non-being, despite the fact that some people imagine it to be uncreated. In the present case, being begotten coincides with existence, and is

"from the beginning";[8] so where are you going to put this cleft stick of a question? What point is there prior to "from the beginning" to fix the existence or non-existence of the Son? Either way the notion of "from the beginning" will be destroyed. Unless, when we put the question whether the Father comes from being or non-being, you risk the answers *either* that he has a double being, partly existing, partly pre-existing, *or* that he is in the same case with the Son, being a product of non-being. This is what your puerile conundrums lead to. Sandcastles, they cannot stand a puff of wind.

No, I allow neither supposition. I say that the question presents an absurdity, not the answer a difficulty. If you follow your logical presuppositions and hold that in every case one of the alternatives must be true, then I shall put you a little question. Is Time *in* Time, or not? If it is, what is the Time it is in? What is the difference between them? How does one contain the other? If Time is not in Time, how acute your wits are to get us non-temporal Time! What about the proposition: "I am now making a false statement"? You must concede one of the alternatives, it is either true or false—we cannot allow both. But that is impossible. If the statement is false, it will be true and if it is true, it will be false, by logical necessity. Is there anything remarkable then in the fact that contraries can both be true in the case under discussion, just as they are both false in the other case, and thus your sophistry will be shown up for the silliness it is? Here is another teaser for you to solve: were you present to yourself when you were being begotten and are you present to yourself now, or are both propositions false? If you were and are present, who is present to whom? How did the pair of you come to be a single whole? If both alternatives are false, how is it that you came to be parted from yourself and what caused the disjunction? No, it is stupid to stir up a dust about whether a thing is present to itself or not. The expression "is present" is used to imply a relationship with other things not with itself. You must appreciate that it is even stupider to be correcting people on the subject of whether or not what has been begotten from "from the beginning"[9] existed prior to its begetting. That question only arises in connection with temporally determined beings.

## 10

*But*, it may be said, *the ingenerate and the generate are not the same. If that is the case, the Father and the Son cannot be the same thing.*

It goes without saying that this argument excludes either the Father or the

Son from the Godhead—if ingeneracy is the substance of God, generacy is not his substance and *vice versa*. There is no gainsaying this, is there? Make your choice of the alternative blasphemies, you empty-headed theologian, since you are fully intent on blaspheming. Still, what are your grounds for denying that ingenerate and generate are the same? If you had said uncreated and created, I should agree—what has no origin and what is created cannot be the same in nature. But if you are talking about begetter and begotten, this is a false statement—these *must* be the same; it is in the nature of an offspring to have a nature identical with its parent's. Here is another objection: what do you mean by "the ingenerate" and "the generate"? If you mean ingenerate*ness* and generate*ness*—no, these are not the same thing; but if you mean the things which have these properties in them why should they not be the same? Lack of intelligence and intelligence are not identical, but they belong with and around the same thing, a man. They do not separate substances, they are separated in connection with the same substance. Do immortality, innocence, and immutability each constitute God's being? No, if that were so, there would be a plurality of "beings" of God, not a single being. Or is Deity a composite resulting from these?—if these are "beings" or substances, there would have to be composition.

11

They do not hold that view, because these are properties of other beings besides God. The substance of God is what belongs to him particularly and uniquely. The people who allege that "matter" and "form" are ingenerate would not agree that ingeneracy is uniquely a property of God—we will cast the Manichaean darkness into the further background. But suppose it does belong uniquely to God, what was Adam? Was he not alone in being a creation formed by God?

*Yes*, you will say.

Was he alone in being human as well?

*Of course not.*

Why?

*Because* manhood *is not* formation*; what has parentage is also human.*

In the same way, it is not the case that the ingenerate and only the ingenerate is God (though only the Father is ingenerate) but you must allow that the Begotten too is God. The Begotten stems from God, however fond you are of unbegottenness. Next, how are you to talk of the being of God, when what is

said about that being is not a positive assertion but a negation? “Unbegotten” means that he has no parent. It does not state his nature, but simply the fact that he was not begotten.

*So what* is *the being of God?*

You must be mad to ask the question, making such a fuss about begottenness! We count it a high thing that we may perhaps learn what it is in the time to come, when we are free of this dense gloom. That is the promise of one who cannot lie.[10] Yes, this is what men, who purify themselves for it, must think of and hope for. As for us, we will confidently affirm that if it is a high thing for the Father to have no starting point, it is no less a thing for the Son to stem from such a Father. He must share in the glory of the uncaused, because he stems from the uncaused. That he has been begotten is a further fact about him, as significant as it is august, for men whose minds are not totally earthbound and materialistic.

## 12

*But,* they say, *if the Son is the same in substance as the Father, and the Father is unbegotten, then the Son must be unbegotten too.*

True—if ingeneracy were God’s substance. Which would give us an outlandish mix-up—an unbegotten-begotten. But supposing the difference lies outside the substance of God, what validity has your argument got? Must you be your father’s father, if you are to avoid missing anything he has, when you are the same in substance as he? Surely it is clear that when we are looking, if look we can, for what God’s substance consists in, a personal characteristic must be left out of account. This is the way to find out that God and ingeneracy are not identical. If they were identical, the Ingenerate would have to be somebody’s Ingenerate, since God is somebody’s God, seeing that logical equivalents can be used interchangeably. But what is it the Ingenerate *of* ? God is somebody’s—he is God *of* all. So how can “God” and “ingenerate” be identical? And again since ingeneracy and begottenness are mutually opposed, as privation and condition, it follows that mutually opposed beings or substances have been brought in—which is impossible. Or again, since conditions are prior to privations, and privations take away conditions, not only must the Son’s substance be prior to the Father’s but it must also be in process of destruction by the Father on your presuppositions.

## 13

What is left of their invincible arguments? Perhaps they will take a last refuge in this argument:

*Unless God has ceased to beget, the begetting must be unfinished and at some time stop; but if it has stopped, it must have started.*

Here again we have crude, bodily ideas, from crude, bodily people. For my own part I am not committing myself to saying whether or not the process of being begotten is eternal, until I have made a close examination of the text: "Before all the hills, he begets me."[11] But I see no necessity in their argument.

*If,* as they say, *what is going to stop must have started, what is not going to stop cannot have started.*

What, on that showing, will the soul or angels be? If they have a beginning, they must cease, but if they are not going to end, obviously, according to these people, they have no beginning either. But in fact they did begin and they will not end. Their argument then, that something that is going to end requires a beginning, is untrue. Our position, of course, is that horses, man, oxen, and each item that comes under the same species have a single concept. Whatever shares in the concept is rightly called by that name, and whatever does not share in it is either not called, or not properly called by the name. Thus too there is a single substance, nature, and appellation of God, even though the names are distinguished along with distinct ideas about him. Whatever is called "God" in the full and proper sense *is* God and whatever he is in his nature is a true name for him—granted that real truth is contained in realities, not in names. These people, though, act as if they were afraid of leaving any opposition to the truth untried. They acknowledge the Son as "God," when forced by reason and proof-texts to do so, but only in an equivocal sense. He shares the appellation and the appellation alone!

## 14

When we make them the rejoinder, "Well, do you really mean that the Son is not 'God' in the full and proper sense of the word, in the same way that a picture of an animal is not an animal? In that case, how can he be God, supposing he is not 'God' in the proper sense?" they answer,

*Why should not the names be the same and used in the proper sense in either case?*

They will instance the Greek word for “dog,” used homonymously and in the proper sense (that being typical of homonyms) to mean both a dog and a shark and any other case where something bears the same title it shares equally with something else of a different nature.

In these instances, dear fellow, you are putting two natures under the same denomination, not making one superior to, or prior to, the other, or one more true to its name than the other. There is nothing attached to the names to force that conclusion—the animal and the fish are equally entitled to the same Greek name, “dog”—and why not? Yes, different things on the same level do share the same appellation. Yet when it comes to God, you attach an awe-inspiring solemnity to him, a transcendence of every substance and nature. What constitutes the unique nature of God’s deity, so to say, you ascribe to the Father but then rob the Son of it and make him subordinate. You give the Son a second level in quality and worship. Even if you endow him with the syllables which make up the word “*similar*,” you in fact truncate his Godhead, and make a mischievous transition from an homonymity maintaining equality to one connecting unequals. The result is that a pictured and a living man are more apt illustrations for you of the Godhead of Father and Son than the “dogs” (dog and shark) you used. Alternatively, you must concede that the fact that they have a common name puts their natures on the same level, even if you are making out that they are different; in that case, you have ruined your “dog” example, which you hit on to illustrate a disparity of natures. What does it matter that the animals you distinguish have the same name, “dog,” if they are on the same level? The point, after all, of having recourse to “dogs” and ambiguous names was to prove disparity, not parity. How could anyone stand more clearly convicted of self-confuting blasphemy?

## 15

If we say that the Father is *qua* cause superior to the Son, they add the minor premise,

*but he is cause by nature* and hence conclude that *he is greater by nature.*

I do not know whom the fallacy misleads—themselves or their opponents. For it is not the case that all the predicates affirmed of someone can be affirmed without further qualification of his basic being. No, plainly they are affirmed of some particular thing, in some particular respects. Is there anything to stop me also taking as my premise, “the Father is greater by nature” and adding “but

‘being greater by nature’ is not necessarily ‘being Father,’” and then concluding that “‘greater’ is ‘not necessarily greater’ or that ‘Father’ is ‘not necessarily Father’”? Or take another example: “‘God is substance,’ but ‘substance is not necessarily God.’” Draw the conclusion for yourself—“God is not necessarily God.” No, the fallacy here arises from arguing, as the logicians call it, “from the particular to the general.” We concede, of course, that it belongs to the nature of the cause to be superior, but they infer that the superiority belongs to the nature —which is like our saying “man X is dead” and their drawing the inference that “Man,” without qualification, is dead.

## 16

How could we by-pass this next point of theirs, which is quite as dumbfounding as the rest of what they say?

*“Father,”* they say, *is a designation either of the substance or the activity; is it not?*

They intend to impale us on a dilemma, for if we say that it names the substance we shall then be agreeing that the Son is of a different substance, there being a single substance and that one, according to them, preempted by the Father. But if we say that the term designates the activity, we shall clearly be admitting that the Son is a creation not an offspring. If there is an active producer, there must be a production and they will declare themselves surprised at the idea of an identity between creator and created. I should have felt some awe myself at your dilemma, had it been necessary to accept one of the alternatives and impossible to avoid them by stating a third, and truer possibility. My expert friends, it is this: “Father” designates neither the substance nor the activity, but the relationship, the manner of being, which holds good between the Father and the Son. Just as with us these names indicate kindred and affinity, so here too they designate the sameness of stock, of parent and offspring. But to please you, let it be granted that “the Father” is a substance. That idea will bring in the Son along with it, not alienate him, if we follow common sense and the meaning of the appellations. Suppose, if you like, it also stands for his activity; you will not catch us out that way either. He will actively have produced that very consubstantiality, even if the assumption of active production’s being involved here is decidedly odd.

You see how we get clear of your twists and turns, even though you mean to fight foul. Now that we know just how invincible you are in logical twists, let us

see what strength you can muster from Holy Scriptures. Perhaps you may undertake to win us over with them.

## 17

We, after all, understand and preach the Son's Godhead on the basis of their grand and sublime language. What do we mean here: expressions like "God," "Word," "he who is in the beginning," who was "with the beginning," who was "the beginning," "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God"[12] and "with you is the beginning"[13] and "who calls it the beginning from the generations of old"?[14] Then he is the Only-begotten Son: "The Only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him."[15] He is "way," "truth," "life," and "light": "I am the way, the truth, and the life"[16] and "I am the light of the world."[17] He is "wisdom" and "power": "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."[18] He is the "effulgence," "stamp," "image," and "seal": "Who being the effulgence of his glory and the stamp of his person"[19] and "image of goodness"[20] and "for him did God the Father seal."[21] He is "Lord," "King," "he who is," and "almighty": "The Lord rained down fire from the Lord"[22] and "A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of your kingdom"[23] and "who is and was and is to come, even the almighty."[24] Plainly these, and all the expressions synonymous with these, refer to the Son. None of them is a later acquisition, none became attached at a later stage to the Son or to the Spirit any more than to the Father, for perfection does not result from additions. It was never the case that he was without his Word, that he was not Father, that he was not true, or that he was without wisdom and power, or that he lacked life, splendor, or goodness.

## 18

Count up the phrases that in your ignorance you set over against these—"My God and your God,"[25] "greater,"[26] "he created,"[27] "he made,"[28] and "he sanctified."[29] Reckon in, if you like, "slave,"[30] and "obedient,"[31] "he gave,"[32] "he learned,"[33] "he was commanded,"[34] "he was sent,"[35] "he could do nothing,"[36] "speak nothing,"[37] "judge nothing,"[38] "give nothing,"[39] "will nothing of himself."[40] You may add these: his "ignorance,"[41] his "subjection,"[42] his "praying,"[43] his "asking,"[44] his "progress,"[45] and "growing up."[46]

Put in, if you like all the even lowlier expressions used about him—the fact that he "slept,"[47] "was hungry,"[48] "got tired,"[49] "wept,"[50] "was in agony,"[51] was subjected.[52] Maybe you reproach him for his cross and death—I expect you will let his Resurrection and Ascension go free, seeing that here there is something on our side. You can pick up many more scraps besides these, if you mean to go on fabricating this intruder of yours, this namesake of God. For us he is true God, and on the same level as the Father. Yes, one could easily go through each of these expressions in detail and give you the truly religious interpretation. It is not a hard task to clear away the stumbling block that the literal text of Scripture contains—that is, if your stumbling is real and not just willful malice. In sum: you must predicate the more sublime expressions of the Godhead, of the nature which transcends bodily experiences, and the lowlier ones of the compound, of him who because of you was emptied, became incarnate and (to use equally valid language) was "made man."[53] Then next he was exalted, in order that you might have done with the earthbound carnality of your opinions and might learn to be nobler, to ascend with the Godhead and not linger on in things visible but rise up to spiritual realities, and that you might know what belongs to his nature and what to God's plan of salvation.

## 19

He whom presently you scorn was once transcendent, over even you. He who is presently human was incomposite. He remained what he was; what he was not, he assumed. No "because" is required for his existence in the beginning,[54] for what could account for the existence of God? But later he came into being because of something, namely your salvation, yours, who insult him and despise his Godhead for that very reason, because he took on your thick corporeality. Through the medium of the mind he had dealings with the flesh, being made that God on earth, which is Man:[55] Man and God blended. They became a single whole, the stronger side predominating, in order that I might be made God to the same extent that he was made man. He was begotten[56]—yet he was already begotten[57]—of a woman.[58] And yet she was a virgin.[59] That it was from a woman makes it human, that she was a virgin makes it divine. On earth he has no father,[60] but in heaven no mother.[61] All this is part of his Godhead. He was carried in the womb,[62] but acknowledged by a prophet as yet unborn himself, who leaped for joy at the presence of the Word for whose sake he had been

created.[63] He was wrapped in swaddling bands,[64] but at the Resurrection he unloosed the swaddling bands of the grave.[65] He was laid in a manger,[66] but was extolled by angels, disclosed by a star and adored by Magi.[67] Why do you take offense at what you see, instead of attending to its spiritual significance? He was exiled into Egypt,[68] but he banished the Egyptian idols.[69] He had "no form or beauty"[70] for the Jews, but for David he was "fairer than the children of men"[71] and on the mount he shines forth, becoming more luminous than the Sun,[72] to reveal the future mystery.

## 20

As man he was baptized,[73] but he absolved sins as God;[74] he needed no purifying rites himself—his purpose was to hallow water. As man he was put to the test, but as God he came through victorious[75]—yes, bids us be of good cheer, because he has conquered the world.[76] He hungered[77]—yet he fed thousands.[78] He is indeed "living, heavenly bread."[79] He thirsted[80]—yet he exclaimed: "Whosoever thirsts, let him come to me and drink."[81] Indeed he promised that believers would become fountains.[82] He was tired[83]—yet he is the "rest" of the weary and the burdened.[84] He was overcome by heavy sleep[85]—yet he goes lightly over the sea, rebukes winds, and relieves the drowning Peter.[86] He pays tax—yet he uses a fish to do it;[87] indeed he is emperor over those who demand the tax. He is called a "Samaritan, demonically possessed"[88]—but he rescues the man who came down from Jerusalem and fell among thieves.[89] Yes, he is recognized by demons,[90] drives out demons,[91] drowns deep a legion of spirits,[92] and sees the prince of demons falling like lightning.[93] He is stoned, yet not hit;[94] he prays, yet he hears prayer.[95] He weeps,[96] yet he puts an end to weeping.[97] He asks where Lazarus is laid[98]—he was man; yet he raises Lazarus[99]—he was God. He is sold, and cheap was the price—thirty pieces of silver;[100] yet he buys back the world at the mighty cost of his own blood.[101] A sheep, he is led to the slaughter[102]—yet he shepherds Israel[103] and now the whole world as well.[104] A lamb, he is dumb[105]—yet he is "Word,"[106] proclaimed by "the voice of one crying in the wilderness."[107] He is weakened, wounded[108]—yet he cures every disease and every weakness.[109] He is brought up to the tree[110] and nailed to it[111]—yet by the tree of life he restores us.[112] Yes he saves even a thief crucified with

him;[113] he wraps all the visible world in darkness.[114] He is given vinegar to drink,[115] gall to eat[116]—and who is he? Why, one who turned water into wine,[117] who took away the taste of bitterness,[118] who is all sweetness and desire.[119] He surrenders his life, yet he has power to take it again.[120] Yes, the veil is rent, for things of heaven are being revealed, rocks split, and dead men have an earlier awakening.[121] He dies,[122] but he vivifies[123] and by death destroys death.[124] He is buried,[125] yet he rises again.[126] He goes down to Hades, yet he leads souls up,[127] ascends to heaven,[128] and will come to judge quick and dead,[129] and to probe discussions like these. If the first set of expressions starts you going astray, the second set takes your error away.

## 21

This is the answer we make perforce to these posers of puzzles. Perforce—because Christian people find long-winded controversy disagreeable and one Adversary[130] enough for them. Yet our attackers made it essential, since remedies too must be made for diseases, if they are to learn that their wisdom is not complete and that they are not invincible in their vain attempts to nullify the Gospel. For when we abandon faith to take the power of reason as our shield, when we use philosophical enquiry to destroy the credibility of the Spirit, then reason gives way in the face of the vastness of the realities. Give way it must, set going, as it is, by the frail organ of human understanding. What happens then? The frailty of our reasoning looks like a frailty in our creed. Thus it is that, as Paul too judges, smartness of argument is revealed as a nullifying of the Cross.[131] Faith, in fact, is what gives fullness to our reasoning.

But may he who “expounds hard questions and solves difficulties,”[132] who puts it into our minds to untie the twisted knots of their strained dogmas, may he, above all, change these men and make them believers instead of logicians, Christians instead of what they are currently called. Indeed this is our entreaty. “We beseech you, for Christ’s sake; be reconciled to God and quench not the Spirit”[133]—or rather let Christ be reconciled with you and may the Spirit at long last illuminate you. Bent on quarrel though you may be, yet we have the Trinity in our safekeeping and by the Trinity can be saved, abiding pure and blameless[134] until the more complete revelation of what we long for in Christ himself, our Lord, to whom be glory forever and ever.[135] Amen.

# Notes

[1] Heb 10:38–39.
[2] 1 Jn 1:1; Jn 1:1.
[3] Cf. Plotinus *Enneads* 5.2.
[4] Jn 15:26.
[5] Ps 2:1.
[6] Ps 66(65):6.
[7] Heb 7:9–10.
[8] 1 Jn 1:1; Jn 1:1.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Titus 1:2.
[11] Prov 8:25.
[12] Jn 1:1.
[13] Ps 109:3 [LXX].
[14] Is 41:4
[15] Jn 1:18.
[16] Jn 14:6.
[17] Jn 8:12.
[18] 1 Cor 1:24.
[19] Heb 1:3.
[20] Wis 7:26.
[21] Jn 6:27.
[22] Gen 19:24.
[23] Ps 45(44):6(7).
[24] Rev 1:8.
[25] Jn 20:17.
[26] Jn 14:28.
[27] Prov 8:22.
[28] Acts 2:36.
[29] Jn 10:36.
[30] Phil 2:7.
[31] Phil 2:8.
[32] Jn 18:9.
[33] Heb 5:8.
[34] Jn 5:19; 10:18.

[35] Jn 5:36; 20:21.

[36] Jn 5:19, 30; 8:28.

[37] Jn 12:49.

[38] Jn 8:15–16.

[39] Mk 10:40.

[40] Jn 5:19, 30; 8:28.

[41] Mt 24:36.

[42] Lk 2:51.

[43] E.g. Lk 3:21; 6:12.

[44] E.g. Jn 11:34; Lk 2:46.

[45] Lk 2:52.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Mt 8:24.

[48] Mt 4:2.

[49] Jn 4:6.

[50] Jn 11:35.

[51] Lk 22:44.

[52] Cf. 1 Cor 15:28 (but I suspect an error for the Greek word for “sweated,” Lk 22:44).

[53] Cf. Phil 2:7 and Nicene Creed.

[54] Jn 1:1.

[55] For Gregory the human mind forms an interface with the divine mind, thus allowing of the Son’s incarnation. For the language of “mixture,” “blending” cf. below *First Letter to Cledonius*.

[56] Mt 1:16.

[57] Ps 2:7; Acts 13:33; Heb 1:5, 5:5.

[58] Gal 4:4.

[59] Mt 1:23; Is 7:14; cf. Lk 1:34–35; Mt 1:20.

[60] Mt 1:20.

[61] Cf. Ps 2:7.

[62] Cf. Lk 1:31.

[63] Lk 1:41.

[64] Lk 2:7 and 12.

[65] Cf. Jn 20:6–7.

[66] Lk 2:7 and 16.

[67] Mt 2:2, 7 and 9–11.

[68] Mt 2:13–14.

[69] Cf. Pseudo-Mt 23ff, Hennecke-Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, Vol. 1, p. 308 and

Barbel, p. 164, n. 46.

70 Is 53:2.

71 Ps 45(44):2(3).

72 Mt 17:2.

73 Mt 3:16; Lk 3:21.

74 Jn 1:29; Mt 9:2.

75 Mt 4:1–11; Lk 4:1–13.

76 Jn 16:33.

77 Mt 4:2; Lk 4:2.

78 Mt 14:20–21; 15:37–38; Mk 6:42–44, 8:9.

79 Jn 6:51.

80 Jn 19:28.

81 Jn 7:37.

82 Cf. Jn 7:38.

83 Jn 4:6.

84 Mt 11:28.

85 Cf. Mt 8:24; Mk 4:38.

86 Mt 14:25–32; Mk 6:48–51; Jn 6:19–21; Mt 8:26; Mk 4:39; Lk 8:24.

87 Mt 17:24–27.

88 Jn 8:48.

89 Cf. Lk 10:30.

90 Lk 4:33–34; Mk 1:23–24.

91 Cf. Mt 8:16.

92 Mk 5:9 and 13; Lk 8:30 and 33.

93 Cf. Lk 10:18.

94 Cf. Jn 8:59; 10:31 and 39.

95 E.g. Mk 1:35; Mt 8:13.

96 Jn 11:35.

97 Cf. Lk 7:13; 8:52; 23:28.

98 Jn 11:34.

99 Jn 11:43–44.

100 Mt 26:15.

101 Cf. 1 Cor 6:20; 1 Pet 1:19.

102 Acts 8:32; Is 53:7.

103 Ps 80(79):1(2).

104 Cf. Jn 10:11 and 16.

105 Is 53:7.
106 Jn 1:1.
107 Jn 1:23.
108 Is 53:5.
109 Mt 9:35.
110 1 Pet 2:24.
111 Cf. Jn 19:17–18.
112 Cf. Gen 2:9, 3:2; Rev 2:7.
113 Lk 23:43.
114 Cf. Mt 27:45; Mk 15:33; Lk 23:44.
115 Mt 27:48.
116 Mt 27:34.
117 Jn 2:7–9.
118 Cf. Ex 15:25.
119 Cant 5:16 [LXX].
120 Jn 10:17–18.
121 Mt 27:51–52.
122 Mt 27:50; Mk 15:37; Lk 23:46; Jn 19:30.
123 Jn 5:21.
124 2 Tim 1:10; Heb 2:14.
125 Mt 27:60; Mk 15:46; Lk 23:53; Jn 19:41–42; 1 Cor 15:4.
126 Jn 20:8–9; Mt 28:6; Mk 16:6; Lk 24:6; 1 Cor 15:4.
127 Cf. Eph 4:8–9; Ps 68(67):18(19).
128 Mk 16:19; Lk 24:51; Acts 1:10–11.
129 2 Tim 4:1; 1 Pet 4:5.
130 Cf. 1 Pet 5:8.
131 1 Cor 1:17.
132 Cf. Dan 5:12.
133 2 Cor 5:20; 1 Thess 5:19.
134 Phil 1:10.
135 Rev 1:6.

# ORATION 30
# On the Son

## *The Fourth Theological Oration*

### 1

Last time, by the power of the Spirit, we made havoc enough for you of the subtly calculated dodges, the objections and counter-arguments from the side of sacred Scripture, which these textual vandals use to rob the written words of their sense, get the people on their side, and throw the way of truth into disorder. We have now established a general, and I believe, clear solution, satisfactory to people of sound sense—the solution, I mean, of allocating the more elevated, the more distinctly divine expressions of Scripture to the Godhead, the humbler and more human to the New Adam,[1] God passible for our sake over against sin. The pressure of the argument did not allow us to treat of the passages individually. You want brief explanations here to avoid being swept away by their plausible arguments, and we shall group these explanations in numbered sections to aid the memory.

### 2

This is one passage they have very ready at hand:

*"The Lord created me as the beginning of his ways for his works."*[2]

How are we to treat it? Are we not to denounce Solomon? Shall we not cancel his earlier words because of his later lapse?[3] Must we not take the statement as that of Wisdom herself in the poetical sense of the skill, the systematic principle on which the universe is composed.[4] Scripture consciously personifies many inanimate objects; for example "The Sea said such and such,"[5] "The Deep said, 'It is not in me,'"[6] and "The Heavens declare the glory of God."[7] A sword, to continue the examples, is given an order;[8] mountains and hills are asked why they skip.[9] We adopt neither of these approaches, though they have been taken as forceful by some of our predecessors. No, let the statement stand as that of the Savior himself, the true Wisdom.[10] Let us look at it together for a moment. What reality has no cause? Godhead—no one can talk of

the “cause of God,” otherwise it would be prior to God. But what is cause of the manhood, which God submitted to for us? Our salvation, of course, what else could it be? The passage is now free of complication, seeing that we find there clearly both expressions “created” and “begets me.”[11] Whatever we come across with a causal implication we will attribute to the humanity; what is absolute and free of cause we will reckon to the Godhead. “Created” has a causal implication, has it not? The text in fact runs: “He created me as the beginning of his ways *for his works*.”[12] “The works of his hands are truth and judgment,”[13] and for the sake of these works he was anointed with deity—deity being the humanity’s anointing. But the expression, “begets me,” has no causal implication—indicate, if you can, some qualifying term for it. What objection will there be, then, to Wisdom’s being called “creature” in respect to earthly generation, but “offspring” with regard to the primal and less comprehensible one?

## 3

His being called a “slave” rendering good service to “many”[14] his being given the grand title “Child of God”[15] coheres with this. He was actually subject as a slave to flesh, to birth, and to our human experiences; for our liberation, held captive as we are by sin, he was subject to all that he saved. What does the lowliness of Man possess higher than involvement with God, than being *made* God as a result of this intermingling, than being so “visited by the dayspring from on high” that “the holy thing which is born” has been called “Son of the most high”[16] and that there has been “bestowed on it the name which is above every name”?[17] What could that be but “God”? What of the “bowing of every knee” to one who “was made empty on our account,” who blended the “divine image” with a “slave’s form”?[18] What of the “acknowledgement by all the house of Israel that God made him both Lord and Christ”?[19] Yes, these things were brought about by the action of the offspring and the favor of his parent.

## 4

What is the second of their grand, irresistible arguments?[20]

“*He must reign* until”[21] so and so, must be “*received by heaven* until *the times of restoration*,”[22] must “*possess the throne on the right hand* until *the overpowering of his enemies.*”[23]

What is to happen afterwards? Will he stop ruling as king or be thrust out of heaven? Who is to make him stop or what grounds would he have for doing so? What a bold expositor you are, how very independent of royal government! And yet you hear that "there is no end of his royal rule."[24] No, you are in this sorry case thanks to your failure to recognize that "until" is by no means the logical contrary of what lies in the future; it states the point up to which something happens, but does not deny what goes beyond that point. To cite but one example: how are you to take the statement, "I shall be with you till the end of the world"?[25] As meaning that he will not be with us afterwards? Why should he say that? Besides, you also fail to distinguish meanings. The word "rule" is used in one sense of him as being King Almighty, with or without our consent; but it has another sense of actively producing our submission, of setting us under his royal rule in free acceptance of our being ruled. Of his royal rule in the first sense there will be no end. Will it have an end in the second sense? Yes, when he takes us in safety under his control. Why need he go on producing submission in those who have yielded it? After that submission he rises up in judgment of the earth,[26] dividing saved and lost.[27] After that submission "God stands in the midst of the gods"[28] (meaning "the saved") appointing to each the particular honor, the special mansion,[29] of which he is worthy.

## 5

You must connect with this your subordination of the Son to the Father.[30]

*Why?* you will say. *Is he not subordinate now? If he is God, does he need at all to be made subordinate to God? You are talking as if he were a bandit or an opponent of God!*

No—look at this fact: the one who releases me from the curse was called "curse"[31] because of me; "the one who takes away the world's sin" was called "sin"[32] and is made a new Adam to replace the old.[33] In just this way too, as head of the whole body,[34] he appropriates my want of submission. So long as I am an insubordinate rebel with passions which deny God, my lack of submission will be referred to Christ. But when all things are put in submission under him,[35] when transformed they obediently acknowledge him, then will Christ bring me forward, me who have been saved, and make his subjection complete. In my view Christ's submission is the fulfillment of the Father's will. As we said before, the Son actively produces submission to the Father, while the Father

wills and approves submission to the Son. Thus it is that he effects our submission, makes it his own and presents it to God.[36] "My God, my God, look upon me, why have you forsaken me?"[37] seems to me to have the same kind of meaning. *He* is not forsaken either by the Father or, as some think, by his own Godhead, which shrank in fear from suffering, abandoning the sufferer. Who applies that argument either to his birth in this world in the first place or to his ascent of the cross? No, in himself, as I have said, he expresses our condition. *We* had once been the forsaken and disregarded; then we were accepted and now are saved by the sufferings of the impassible. He made our thoughtlessness and waywardness his own, just as the psalm, in its subsequent course, says[38]—since the Twenty-First Psalm clearly refers to Christ.

## 6

Connected with this general view are the facts that he "learned obedience by the things which he suffered," his "strong crying" and "tears," the fact that he "entreated," that he "was heard" and that he was "God-fearing."[39] These things are a marvelously constructed drama dealing with us. As Word he was neither obedient nor disobedient—the terms apply to amenable subordinates or inferiors who deserve punishment. But as the "form of a slave"[40] he comes down to the same level as his fellow-slaves; receiving an alien "form" he bears the whole of me, along with all that is mine, in himself, so that he may consume within himself the meaner element, as fire consumes wax or the Sun ground mist, and so that I may share in what is his through the intermingling. For this reason he honors obedience in practice and puts it to the proof by suffering. Just as in our case, the disposition is an unsatisfactory thing unless we give it practical effect—deeds show dispositions. We may also make the not invalid assumption that he tests our obedience and measures all our sufferings by his own, so that he can with generous humanity take frailty into account along with suffering, knowing the extent of the demand made on us by the one and how much we are excused by the other. If his Light "shining in the darkness"[41] of this present life was hunted by the other darkness (the evil one,[42] the tempter,[43] I mean) because it had a shade[44] over it, how hotly will our shadows be hunted, seeing they have less power than the light! Is it to be wondered at if, while he entirely escaped, we should to some degree be overcome? With those who keep a true score of these things his being pursued is a greater miracle than our capture. Let me add here to

those I have mentioned this further text, which I judge has clearly the same meaning: “For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted.”[45]

“God will be all in all”[46] at the time of restoration[47]—“God,” not “the Father.” The Son will not revert to disappear completely in the Father, like a torch temporarily withdrawn from a great flame and then joined up again with it—Sabellians[48] must not wrest this text. No, God will be “all in all” when we are no longer what we are now, a multiplicity of impulses and emotions, with little or nothing of God in us, but are fully like God,[49] with room for God and God alone. This is the “maturity”[50] towards which we speed. Paul himself is a special witness here. What he predicates of “God” without further specification in this passage, he elsewhere assigns clearly to Christ. I quote: “Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all in all.”[51]

## 7

Take as third the expression,

“*greater*”;[52]

as fourth, the phrase,

“*my God and your God*.”[53]

Certainly, supposing the Father were called “greater” with no mention of the Son’s being “equal,”[54] they might have a point here. But if it is clear that we find both, what will the noble fellows say, what strength does their case have? How can there be harmony between incompatible terms? It is impossible for the same thing to be, in a like respect, greater than and equal to the same thing. Is it not clear that the superiority belongs to the cause and the equality to the nature? *We* admit this with a good grace. But someone else might persist with our argument and say that derivation from the uncaused does not mean inferiority to the uncaused. He will share in the glory of the unoriginate because he derives from the unoriginate; for men of sense, his generation is a further fact, as significant and as august, about him. Of course, the explanation that the Father is greater than the Son considered as man is true, but trivial. Is there anything remarkable about God’s being greater than man? Certainly this must be our answer to those who preen themselves on their “being greater.”

## 8

On the other hand, God is not called the Word's "God" (how could God, in the proper sense of the term, have a "God"?) but God of the one people saw, in the same way as God is "Father," not of the one people saw but of the Word. In fact, there was a duality about him,[55] with the result that in both cases the reverse of what does or does not properly apply to us holds good of him. In the proper sense of the term, God is our "God" but not our "Father." What leads heretics astray is the coupling together of titles, titles which, because of the intermingling, overlap. Which means that when the natures are distinguished, the titles are differentiated along with the ideas. Listen to Paul's words: "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory . . . "[56] "God" goes with "Christ," "Father" with "Glory." Although both together make a single whole, it is by combination not by nature. What could be more straightforward?

## 9

The fifth point to be mentioned is that

*he receives "life,"[57] "judgment,"[58] "inheritance of the Gentiles,"[59] "power over all flesh,"[60] "glory"[61] "disciples"[62]—everything.*

This "receiving" belongs to his manhood. Yet it would not be absurd to ascribe it to the Godhead. You will not be ascribing him acquired properties, but properties which have existed with him from the outset, not by a principle of grace but by a condition of his nature.

## 10

In the sixth place comes the fact that

*"the Son can do nothing of himself but only what he sees the Father doing."[63]*

The explanation here is along these lines: "can" and "cannot" have many meanings, not just one. One meaning of "cannot" is want of capacity at a certain time with respect to some object. A child "cannot" take part in the games, a puppy dog "cannot" see or "cannot" be a match for some other puppy dog, in this sense. A time will come perhaps when the child does take part in the games, when the puppy dog does see and is a match for that other puppy dog though it cannot take on a different one. Another meaning of "cannot" implies a general

rule, for example: “A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.”[64] It would be hidden were there something larger in the way. Another meaning involves moral unsuitability, for example: “The sons of the bride-chamber cannot fast as long as the bridegroom remains with them.”[65] We can take this either of the bridegroom in his visible body (his stay here was not a time for misery but festivity) or of the bridegroom known spiritually to us as the Word—why need the spiritually cleansed make a bodily fast? Another sense of “cannot” is of refusal by the will. Take, for example, Christ’s inability to do any signs in that area because of unbelief on the part of the recipients.[66] Something essential for cures was required on both sides—faith on the part of the patients, power on that of the healer. So one side without its counterpart could not perform them. I am not sure whether this does not count as a case involving moral unsuitability as well—medical cure is out of place with people who are going to be damaged as a result of unbelief. In this same category of refusal by the will come: “The world cannot not hate you”[67] and “How can you speak good, being evil?”[68] Impossibility here must mean refusal by the will, surely. A similar sort of case occurs with those passages which mention what is impossible for Nature but possible for God if he so chose. For example, the same man “cannot” be born a second time[69] and a needle’s eye “cannot” let a amel through.[70] What could stop these events happening if God willed them?

## 11

Besides all these there is, as in the case we are presently considering, “cannot” in the sense of the totally inconceivable. Just as we affirm that God cannot be evil or fail to exist (“can” would mean impotence in God here, not power), that the unreal cannot exist or twice two be both four and ten, so here it cannot be the case that the Son does something which the Father does not do. For all that the Father has, is the Son’s, and *vice versa*.[71] Nothing belongs only to one, because all things belong to both; even existence *per se*, though it comes to the Son from the Father, belongs to both and both alike. The statement: “I live because of the Father,”[72] corresponds with this fact—meaning *not* that his living and being are restricted by the Father, but that he exists outside time and absolutely, in dependence on the Father. In what sense does he see the Father doing something and does it himself?[73] Is it the way people draw the shapes of letters, keeping their eyes on the copy-book and guided by it because otherwise they cannot get

to the real thing? How could Wisdom possibly need a teacher or be incapable of doing something without instruction? Again, in what sense does the Father "do" something whether now or in the past? Did he establish another, corresponding world before this one, and is he going to bring a future world into existence—the idea being that the Son kept his eyes on these and brought the present world into existence and will do the same for the future one? This argument gets us four worlds—those created by the Father, the others by the Son. The thing is absurd! He cleanses lepers,[74] releases men from demons and diseases,[75] he restores dead men to life,[76] walks on the sea,[77] does all the other things he did—how or when did the Father anticipate these actions of the Son? Clearly the Father indicates the outline, whilst the Word makes a finished product, of the same realities. He acts not like an ignorant slave but ith a master's knowledge—to put it more appropriately, like the Father. This is how I take the statement that the Son does whatever is effected by the Father, in the same way.[78] It is not a question of similarity between their creatures, but of having equal authority over their creation. This will be the meaning too of "the Father's working up till now and the Son also."[79] It is a question not only of creating but of governing and preserving the creatures. The fact that "his angels are *being* made winds"[80] proves the point. So does the fact that "the earth is *being* established on its sure foundation."[81] Yet these things were securely created, once for all. So does the "compacting" of the thunder and the "founding of the wind."[82] Their principle was laid down once for all, but their activity is present and continuous.

## 12

Seventhly must be mentioned:

*the Son's "coming down from heaven not to do his own will, but the will of him who sent him."*[83]

Certainly had these words not been spoken by the very one who "came down" we should have said the language bore the stamp of a mere man like us, not that of the Savior we know. *His* will is not in the least degree opposed to God, is totally dependent upon God. Our merely human will does not always follow the divine; it often resists and struggles against it. This is the way we interpret: "Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me, but not what I will —let your will prevail."[84] The alternative suppositions—either he was ignorant of the thing's possibility, or, he was opposing the Father's will—are both

implausible. No, given that the words come from the one who assumed, that is to say, what "came down," not from what was assumed, we must meet this problem in the same way as the previous one. The words there mean not that the Son has, but that he has not, a will of his own over against the Father's. This would give the sense: "'Not to do my own will,'[85] for what is mine is not distinct from what is yours but belongs to both you and me, who have one will as we have one Godhead." There are many statements of this kind, which make a joint negation and no affirmation. For example, "God does not give the Spirit by measure."[86] He does not "give" it, nor is it "measured" out—God is not measured out by God. Take another case: "Neither was it my iniquity nor my sin."[87] These words mean not that he did, but that he did not, have iniquity and sin. Again, take the phrase: "Not for the righteousness we have done"[88]—no, we did none. This is the clear meaning contained in the subsequent words of the passage. He says what the Father's will is: that every believer in the Son should be saved and should obtain resurrection or re-instatement at the last.[89] Is this the Father's will, but not the Son's at all? Is he unwilling to be preached about or believed in? Who would credit that idea, when the statement that the word which is heard is not the Son's bu the Father's[90] has the same force? Though I have often looked into the matter, I cannot understand how a common property could belong to only one thing. Nor, I think, can anyone else. If you take this view of the Son's will, you take a sound and truly religious view. Every man of good judgment will, I believe, say so too.

## 13

Eighth, they have the passages:

*"That they may know you, the sole, true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent,"*[91] *and "None is good save only one, God."*[92]

The explanation here seems to me quite straightforward. If you attribute "sole, true" to the Father, to what will you attribute Truth *per se*? In fact, if you understand "the sole, wise God"[93] or "who alone possesses immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable"[94] or "King of the ages, incorruptible, invisible, sole wise God"[95] in this way, you will lose the Son altogether. He will have been condemned to death or darkness, judged not wise, not a King, not invisible, *not*—and this is the main point—God at all. How can he help losing the goodness, which in a special way belongs to God alone, along with the rest?

No—I think the words, “That they may know you, the sole, true God,” are meant as a denial of the non-existent, so-called “gods.” The passage could not go on, “And Jesus Christ whom you have sent”[96] if “sole, true” excluded him, and the category of deity was unshared. The words, “None is good”[97] are a reply to the lawyer who was testing him and had borne witness to his goodness as man. Consummate goodness, he meant, belongs to God alone, though the word “good” can be applied to man. Take for example, “The good man out of his good treasure brings forth good,”[98] and “I will give the kingdom to one more good than you”[99] (God is speaking to Saul about David) and “Do good, Lord, to the good”[100]—and all the other passages of a similar character about praiseworthy men touched by what flows from the primal Beauty to their secondary level. If we gain your conviction on this point, that is excellent! If we fail, how are you going to answer those who take the other view that on your premises the Son alone is called “God”? Where? In the following words: “This is your God; no other can be reckoned with him!”[101] and a little later, “Afterwards he was seen on earth and had dealings with humans.”[102]

The addition makes it quite clear that the words do not apply to the Father, but to the Son. He it was who had dealings in the body with us and was made companion of those here below. Supposing an attribution to the Father, not the alleged “gods,” wins here, we shall have lost the day so far as the Father is concerned in the process of directing our efforts against the Son. Could there be a more wretched, costlier victory than that?

## 14

The ninth point they will make is the phrase

*“Ever living to appeal for us.”*[103]

Yes indeed—what deep significance and humanity it expresses! “Appealing” does not imply here, as it does in popular parlance, a desire for legal satisfaction—there is something humiliating in the idea. No, it means representing us in his role of mediator, in the way that the Spirit too is spoken of as “appealing” on our behalf.[104] “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man, Jesus Christ.”[105] Even at this moment he is, as man, making representation for my salvation, until he makes me divine by the power of his incarnate manhood. “As man” I say, because he still has with him the body he assumed, though he is no longer “regarded as flesh”[106]—meaning

the bodily experiences, which, sin aside, are ours and his. This is the "Advocate"[107] we have in Jesus—not a slave who falls prostrate before the Father on our behalf. Get rid of what is really a slavish suspicion, unworthy of the Spirit. It is not in God to make that demand nor in the Son to submit to it; the thought is unjust to God. No, it is by what he suffered as man that he persuades us, as Word and Encourager, to endure. That, for me, is the meaning of his "advocacy."

## 15

Their tenth point is his ignorance, the fact that

*no one except the Father knows the last day or hour, not even the Son himself.*[108]

Yet how can any fact be unknown to Wisdom,[109] the worlds' maker,[110] who perfects,[111] transforms,[112] and limits[113] things created, who knows the things of God just as man's spirit knows the things in man?[114] What knowledge could be more perfect than that? How can he know distinctly what precedes the hour of the world's end, what, so to say, lies on its surface, and yet not know the hour itself? The thing is like a riddle—like saying a person has a distinct knowledge of what is in front of a wall, but does not know the wall itself, or, that he distinctly knows the end of the day, but does not know the beginning of night. Knowledge of one thing here necessarily involves knowledge of the other. Surely everyone will see that if you separate the real from the apparent meaning of the passage it is saying that he does know as God, but that, as man, he does not. The absolute use of the title, "Son," here, without any relational qualification of the term telling you *whose* son, provides us with a deeper meaning, so that we interpret this ignorance in the most truly religious way by ascribing it not to the divine but to the human.

## 16

If this is an adequate explanation, we should stop and nothing further ought to be demanded of us. If not, a second explanation is required. Let us, as in every other case, pay honor here to the parent by referring knowledge of the highest things also to him as cause. I think that even if one reads the text in a different way from our scholars, one would have some idea of the fact that even the Son's knowledge of the day or hour is none other than his knowledge that the Father

knows them. What conclusion do we draw? Since the Son's knowledge is grounded in the Father's, the obvious conclusion that here we have what can be known and understood by none but the primal nature.

It would remain for us to discuss the fact that he "received commandments"[115] and "kept" them,[116] and at all times did what was pleasing to the Father.[117] There would still be the questions of his "perfecting,"[118] and "exaltation,"[119] his "learning obedience as the result of what he suffered,"[120] his "high-priesthood"[121] and "offering,"[122] his "surrender,"[123] his "prayer to the one who could save him from death,"[124] his "agony,"[125] his "bloody sweat,"[126] his "prayer,"[127] and everything else of the same character. Yes there would, were it not clear to everybody that expressions like these refer to the passible element not the immutable nature transcending suffering.

The explanations given so far in reply to objections are certainly only a rough draft, a basis on which closer critics can work out something fuller. An appropriate sequel to our previous discussions would be the explanation of the deep significance of each of the titles applied to the Son. We ought not to pass them by unlooked at because of their number and the multiplicity of aspects to which they refer.

## 17

Our starting-point must be the fact that God cannot be named. Not only will deductive arguments prove it, but the wisest Hebrews of antiquity, so far as can be gathered, will too. The ancient Hebrews used special symbols to venerate the divine and did not allow anything inferior to God to be written with the same letters as the word "God, " on the ground that the divine should not be put on even this much of a level with things human. Would they ever have accepted the idea that the uniquely indissoluble nature could be expressed by evanescent speech? No man has yet breathed all the air; no mind has yet contained or language embraced God's substance in its fullness. No, we use facts connected with him to outline qualities that correspond with him, collecting a faint and feeble mental image from various quarters. Our noblest theologian is not one who has discovered the whole—our earthly shackles do not permit us the whole—but one whose mental image is by comparison fuller, who has gathered in his mind a richer picture, outline, or whatever we call it, of the truth.

## 18

So far as we can get to them, then, “He who is” and “God” are in some special way names of his being. “He who is” has the superiority here. He used it of himself, in delivering his oracles to Moses on the mountain, telling Moses, who asked what he should be called, to say to the people: “He who is has sent me.”[128] But this is not the only reason; we also find it to be a more distinctively full and apt name. “God,” according to bright students of Greek etymology, is derived from words meaning “to run” or “to burn”—the idea being of continuous movement and consuming of evil qualities hence, certainly, God is called a “consuming fire.”[129] Nevertheless, it is a relational, not an absolute term. The same thing applies to the word “Lord” which is also used as a name of God. “I am the Lord thy God,” he says, “this is my name,”[130] and, “The Lord is his name.”[131] But we are making deeper inquiries into a nature which has absolute existence, independent of anything else. The actual, personal being of God in its fullness is neither limited nor cut short by any prior or any subsequent reality—so it was and so it will be.

## 19

God’s other titles fall into two distinct groups. The first group belongs to his power, the second to his providential ordering of the world, a two-fold providential ordering—involving, and not involving, incarnation. Clear cases of titles which belong to his power are “Almighty”[132] and “King”—be it of glory,”[133] “the ages,”[134] “of the forces,”[135] or “of the Beloved,”[136] or “rulers”[137] —“Lord Sabaoth,”[138] which means “Lord of the armies,” “forces,”[139] or “masters.”[140] To his providential ordering belong: “God”—be it “of salvation,”[141] “retribution,”[142] “peace,”[143] “righteousness,”[144] or “of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,”[145] or of all the spiritual “Israel,”[146] which has the vision of God.[147] For since we are controlled by three conditions—fear of punishment, hope for salvation and glory too, and the practice of the virtues which results in these last—the name which mentions retribution deals with fear, the one which mentions salvation with hope, and that which refers to virtues disciplines us to practice them. The intention is that by, as it were, carrying God inside him,[148] a man may have some success here and press on all the harder to perfection, towards that affinity with God which comes from the virtues.

These names of deity are shared. The personal name of the unoriginate is

“Father”; of the eternally begotten, “Son”; of what has issued, or proceeds, without generation, “the Holy Spirit.”

Let us turn now to the main point of our discussion—the Son’s titles.

## 20

I take the view that he is called “Son” because he is not simply identical in substance with the Father, but stems from him. He is “Only-begotten”[149] not just because he alone stems uniquely from what is unique, but because he does so in a unique fashion unlike things corporeal. He is “Word,”[150] because he is related to the Father as word is to mind, not only by reason of the undisturbed character of his birth, but also through the connection and declaratory function involved in the relationship. One could say too, perhaps, that his relationship is that of definition to term defined, since “word” has the meaning in Greek of “definition.” He who has known the Son (“seen” means “known” in that context) has known the Father.[151] The Son is the concise and simple revelation of the Father’s nature—everything born is a tacit definition of its parent. You would not be wrong, were you to explain the name from the fact that he exists inherently in real things. Is there anything whose being is not held together[152] by reason? He is called “Wisdom”[153] as being the science of matters divine and human. How could the maker[154] be ignorant of the principles involved in his works? He is “Power,”[155] because he is what sustains his creatures[156] and furnishes them with the power to maintain themselves. He is “Truth,”[157] because truth is a single whole, whilst falsehood is a splintered complex, and because he is the unstained seal,[158] the utterly faithful impress[159] of the Father. He is called “Image”[160] because he is consubstantial with the Father; he stems from the Father and not the Father from him, it being the nature of an image to copy the original and be called after it. But there is more to it than this. The ordinary image is a motionless copy of a moving being. Here we have a living image of a living being, indistinguishable from its original to a higher degree than Seth from Adam[161] and any earthly offspring from its parnt. Beings with no complexity to their nature have no points of likeness or unlikeness. They are exact replicas, identical rather than like. He is called “Light,”[162] because he is the brilliance of souls pure in mind and life. If ignorance and sin are darkness, knowledge and inspired life must be light. He is “ Life,”[163] because he is “ Light,” constituting and giving reality to every thinking being. “For in him we live, move, and

exist”[164] and there is a two-fold sense in which he breathes into us;[165] we are filled, all of us, with his breath, and those who are capable of it, all those who open their mind’s mouth wide enough, with his Holy Spirit.[166] He is called “Righteousness,”[167] because he decides in accordance with merit;[168] he makes a fair assessment of the competing claims of the body under the Law and the soul under Grace[169] so that one side has the supremacy over the other, the better rules the inferior and the baser cannot rebel against the superior. He is called “Sanctification,”[170] because he is purity, so that what is pure may be filled with his pureness. He is “Redemption,”[171] because he sets us free from the bonds of sin and gives himself in exchange for us as a ransom sufficient to cleanse the world. He is “Resurrection,”[172] because he raises us up from this world and leads us on to life,[173] done to death, though we were, by sin.

## 21

These titles so far, of course, belong to him on both levels, the transcendent and the human. Those that are distinctively human and belong to what he assumed from us are, first, “Man.”[174] He bears the title, “Man” not just with a view to being accessible through his body to corporeal things—being in all other respects inaccessible, owing to the incomprehensibility of his nature—but with the aim of hallowing Man through himself, by becoming a sort of yeast for the whole lump. He has united with himself all that lay under condemnation, in order to release it from condemnation. For all our sakes he became all that we are, sin apart—body, soul, mind, all that death pervades. The joint result is a man who is visibly, because he is spiritually discerned as, God. He is “Son of Man”[175] through Adam and through the Virgin, from whom he was descended—from Adam his forefather, from the Virgin by the law of motherhood, not by that of fatherhood. He is “Christ”[176] because of his Godhead. The “chrisis,” or “anointing,” is the anointing of his humanity. Unlike all other anointed men,[177] it does not hallow him by its action, but by the presence of the anointer in fullness. (The effect here is to give what anoints the title, “Man,” and to make what receives the unction “God.”) He is “the Way,”[178] because he takes us along with him. He is “the Door,”[179] because he leads us in. He is “ Shepherd,”[180] because he settles us in green pastures, nurtures us by still waters,[181] leading us hence[182] and defending us against wild beasts.[183] The straying he turns back, the lost he

recovers; what is broken he binds up, what is strong he watches.[184] Using the principles of pastoral science, he gathers us into his heavenly fold.[185] He is called “Sheep,”[186] because he was sacrificed, a “Lamb,”[187] because he was without blemish.[188] He is the “High Priest,”[189] because he presented the offering, “Melchizedek,”[90] because on the transcendent level he had no mother, on the human level no father, and his high estate is without genealogy.[191] “Who,” it says, “can recount his generation?”[192] He is “Melchizedek” too, as King of Salem, or Peace, as King of Righteousness, and because he tithes the Patriarchs who prevailed over evil powers.[193]

There you have the Son’s titles. Walk like God through all that are sublime, and with a fellow-feeling through all that involve the body; but better, treat all as God does, so that you may ascend from below to become God, because he came down from above for us. Above all, keep hold of this truth and apply it to all the loftier and lowlier names and you will never fail: Jesus Christ in body and spirit the same, yesterday, today, and forever.[194] Amen.

## Notes

1 Cf. 1 Cor 15:45.
2 Prov 8:22.
3 1(3) Kg 11:1–13.
4 Col 1:17.
5 Job 28:14
6 Ibid.
7 Ps 19(18):1(2).
8 Zech 13:7.
9 Ps 114(113):6.
10 Cf. 1 Cor 1:24.
11 Prov 8:22 and 25.
12 Prov 8:22.
13 Ps 111(110):7.
14 Cf. Is 49:3 and 5, 53:11 [LXX].
15 Cf. Is 49:6 [LXX].
16 Lk 1:78, 35, 32.
17 Phil 2:9.

18 Phil 2:5–11; 2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15.

19 Acts 2:36.

20 If the Eunomians used this passage to prove the inferiority of the Son, Marcellus of Ancyra (died c. 375), long time associate of Athanasius and opponent of Arius, found support in it for his "Sabellian" (i.e. ultimately unipersonal) doctrine of God.

21 1 Cor 15:25.

22 Acts 3:21.

23 Ps 110(109):1.

24 Lk 1:33.

25 Mt 28:20.

26 Ps 94(93):2.

27 Cf. Mt 25:32–33.

28 Ps 82(81):l.

29 Jn 14:2.

30 Cf. 1 Cor 15:25.

31 Gal 3:13.

32 Jn 1:29; 2 Cor 5:21.

33 Cf. 1 Cor 15:22 and 45.

34 Col 1:18; Eph 5:23.

35 1 Cor 15:28.

36 Cf. 1 Cor 15:28.

37 Ps 21:1 [LXX]; cf. Mt 27:46.

38 Ps 22(21):1–3.

39 Cf. Heb 5:7–8.

40 Phil 2:7.

41 Jn 1:5.

42 Cf. 1 John 5:18.

43 Mt 4:3.

44 I.e. Christ's manhood.

45 Heb 2:18.

46 1 Cor 15:28.

47 Cf. Acts 3:21.

48 From Sabellius, early third century heretic, about whose actual teachings nothing reliable is known. He allegedly taught that "Father," "Son," and "Holy Spirit" are names of the same being in successive manifestations. In the fourth century "Sabellian" is code for "Marcellan" (see note on para 4).

49 Cf. 1 John 3:2; 2 Pet 1:4.

50 Cf. Col 1:28.

51 Col 3:11.

52 Jn 14:28.

53 Jn 20:17.

54 Phil 2:6.

55 A remark like this leaves Gregory open to the objections that are to be treated in the Letters to Cledonius.

56 Eph 1:17.

57 Jn 5:26.

58 Jn 5:22 and 27.

59 Ps 2:8.

60 Jn 17:2.

61 Rev 5:12.

62 Jn 17:6.

63 Jn 5:19.

64 Mt 5:14.

65 Mt 9:15; Mk 2:19; Lk 5:34.

66 Mt 13:58; Mk 6:5.

67 Cf. Jn 7:7.

68 Mt 12:34.

69 Jn 3:4.

70 Mt 19:24.

71 Jn 16:15; 17:10.

72 Jn 6:57.

73 Jn 5:19.

74 E.g. Mt 8:2–3; Mk 1:40; Lk 5:13; 17:12–14.

75 Mk 1:34; Mt 8:16.

76 E.g. Mt 9:23–25; Jn 11:43–44.

77 Mt 14:25; Mk 6:48; Jn 6:19.

78 Jn 5:19.

79 Jn 5:17.

80 Heb 1:7.

81 Ps 104(103):5.

82 Am 4:13.

83 Jn 6:38.

84 Mt 26:39.

85 Jn 6:38.

86 Jn 3:34.
87 Ps 59(58):3(4)
88 Dan 9:18.
89 Jn 6:40.
90 Jn 14:24.
91 Jn 17:3.
92 Mk 10:18; Lk 18:19.
93 Rom16:27.
94 1 Tim 6:16.
95 1 Tim 1:17.
96 Jn 17:3.
97 Lk 18:19.
98 Mt 12:35.
99 1 Sam (1 Kg) 15:28.
100 Ps 125(124):4.
101 Bar 3:36.
102 Bar 3:38.
103 Heb 7:25.
104 Rom 8:26.
105 1 Tim 2:5.
106 2 Cor 5:16.
107 1 Jn 2:1.
108 Mk 13:32.
109 1 Cor 1:30.
110 Heb 1:2.
111 Heb 12:2.
112 Cf. Rev 21:5.
113 Rev 1:8; 22:13.
114 1 Cor 2:11.
115 Cf. Jn 10:18; 12:49.
116 Jn 15:10.
117 Jn 8:29.
118 Heb 5:9.
119 Acts 2:33; cf. Phil 2:9.
120 Heb 5:8.
121 Heb 5:10; 7:1; 8:1.

122 Heb 9:7; Eph 5:2.
123 Gal 2:20.
124 Heb 5:7.
125 Lk 22:44.
126 Ibid.
127 Ibid.
128 Ex 3:14.
129 Deut 4:24.
130 Is 42:8.
131 Ex 15:3.
132 Am 3:13; Rev 4:8.
133 Ps 24(23):10.
134 1 Tim 1:17.
135 Ps 68(67):13.
136 Ps 67:13 [LXX].
137 1 Tim 6:15.
138 Is 1:9; Rom 9:29.
139 Ps 24(23):10.
140 1 Tim 6:15; cf. Deut 10:17.
141 Ps 68(67):20(21).
142 Ps 94(93):1.
143 Rom 15:33.
144 Ps 4:1(2).
145 Ex 3:6.
146 Cf. Rom 9:6–8; 11:26; Gal 6:16.
147 Cf. Gen 32:30(31).
148 Cf. 1 Cor 6:19–20.
149 Jn 1:18.
150 Jn 1:1.
151 Jn 14:9; cf. Mt 11:27.
152 Col 1:17.
153 1 Cor 1:30.
154 Col 1:17.
155 Cf. Rom 1:4; Col 1:15–19.
156 Cf. Jn 1:3.
157 Jn 14:6.

158 Jn 6:27.
159 Heb 1:3.
160 Col 1:15.
161 Cf. Gen 4:25.
162 Jn 8:12; 9:5.
163 Jn 14:6.
164 Acts 17:28.
165 Cf. Gen 2:7; Jn 20:22.
166 Ps 118:131 [LXX].
167 1 Cor 1:30.
168 Cf. Mt 16:27; Rom 2:6.
169 Rom 6:14.
170 1 Cor 1:30.
171 Ibid.
172 Jn 11:25.
173 Cf. Tob 13:2; Wis 16:13; Deut 32:39; 1 Sam (1 Kg) 2:6.
174 Jn 9:11.
175 Mt 9:6.
176 Mt 1:16.
177 Cf. Ex 30:30; 1 Sam(1 Kg) 10:1.
178 Jn 14:6.
179 Jn 10:9.
180 Jn 10:11.
181 Ps 23(22):2.
182 Cf. Jn 10:4.
183 Cf. Ezek 34:25.
184 Ezek 34:16.
185 Is 40:11.
186 Is 53:7.
187 Ibid.
188 Ex 12:5.
189 Heb 6:20.
190 Heb 7:1.
191 Heb 7:3.
192 Is 53:8.
193 Heb 7:1–2.

194 Heb 13:8.

# ORATION 31
# On the Holy Spirit

## *The Fifth Theological Oration*

### 1

So stands the doctrine of the Son. It has passed through the midst of its adversaries unscathed by their stones.[1] The Word cannot be stoned. The Word, if you like, flings stones, striking the wild beasts, the arguments, which mischievously approach the mount.

*But what do you say,* they ask, *about the Holy Spirit? Where did you get this strange, unscriptural "God" you are bringing in?*

This is the view of people already fairly sound so far as the Son is concerned. You find roads and rivers will divide and join up again, and the same thing occurs here because there is a wealth of irreligion. People elsewhere divided concur on some points, and the result is that it is impossible to get a clear idea of what they agree on and on what they disagree.

### 2

Of course there is something especially difficult in the doctrine of the Spirit. It is not just that men exhausted by discussions of the Son are more eager to take on the Spirit—they must have something to blaspheme or life would be unlivable—but also that we become worn out by the quantity of issues. We are in the same condition as men who lose their appetite for all food regardless of what it is, after being disgusted with some particular dish; we take an equal dislike to all doctrinal discussion. All the same, let the Spirit aid us, and the Word will have its course and God be glorified. We leave to others a careful, critical analysis of the many different senses in which "spirit" and "holy" are used in Scripture, with the texts that bear upon the enquiry. We leave too the additional problem of the particular sense resulting from the combination of the terms—I mean "Holy Spirit." Others[2] have benefited themselves and us, as we too have benefited them, by systematic studies here. We, though, shall now turn to a further stage in the discussion.

## 3

Yes, some people, very eager to defend the letter, are angry with us for introducing a God, the Holy Spirit, who is a stranger and an intruder. They must understand that "they are afraid where no fear is."[3] They must recognize clearly that their love for the letter is a cloak[4] for irreligion, as shall be proved presently when we do our best to refute their objections. For our part we have such confidence in the Godhead of the Spirit, that, rash though some may find it, we shall begin our theological exposition by applying identical expressions to the Three. "He was the true light that enlightens every man coming into the world"[5] —yes, the Father. "He was the true light that enlightens every man coming into the world"—yes, the Son. "He was the true light that enlightens every man coming into the world"—yes, the Comforter.[6] These are three subjects and three verbs—he was and he was and he was. But a single reality *was*. There are three predicates—light and light and light. But the light is one, God is one. This is the meaning of David's prophetic vision: "In your light we shall see light."[7] We receive the Son's light from the Father's light[8] in the light of the Spirit: that is what we ourselves have seen and what we now proclaim—it is the plain and simple explanation of the Trinity. Let the treacherous deal treacherously, let the transgressor transgress[9]—*we* shall preach what we know. We shall climb a lofty mountain and shout it out, if we are not given a hearing below. We shall extol the Spirit; we shall not be afraid.[10] If we do have fear, it will be of silence not of preaching.

## 4

If there was a "when" when the Father did not exist, there was a "when" when the Son did not exist. If there was a "when" when the Son did not exist, there was a "when" when the Holy Spirit did not exist. If one existed from the beginning,[11] so did all three. If you cast one down, I make bold to tell you not to exalt the other two. What use is incomplete deity? Or rather what is deity if it is incomplete? Something is missing if it does not have Holiness, and how could it have Holiness without having the Holy Spirit? Either God's Holiness is independent of the Holy Spirit (and in that case I should like to be told what it is supposed to be) or if it is identical with the Holy Spirit, how, I ask, could it fail to be from the beginning[12]—as if it had at one time been to God's advantage to

be incomplete and without his Spirit. If he did not exist from the beginning,[13] he has the same rank as I have, though with a slight priority—we are both separated from God by time. If he has the same rank as I have, how can he make me God,[14] how can he link me with deity?

## 5

But I will now take the investigation a stage further back for you—we have discussed the Trinity earlier. The Sadducees alleged that the Holy Spirit does not exist at all and that there are no angels and no resurrection. I do not know what grounds they had for their scornful rejection of so many important proof-texts in the Old Testament. Amongst non-Christians,[15] on the other hand, the more theologically-minded, with views nearer our own, had, I think, some mental picture of him. They were divided, though, as to his name; "mind of the universe," "external mind," and suchlike were the titles they gave him. Amongst our own experts,[16] some took the Holy Spirit as an active process, some as a creature, some as God. Others were agnostic on this point *out of reverence*, as they put it, *for Scripture, which has given no clear revelation either way.*

On these grounds they offer him neither worship nor disrespect; they take up a sort of halfway (or should I say "a thoroughly pitiful"?) position about him. Amongst those who take him as God, some keep their devotion to their own minds, others venture to express it with their lips as well. I understand that there are others besides, even more expert at measuring out Godhead. These acknowledge as we do that it is three beings that are spiritually discerned, but they put a vast distance between them. One is infinite in substance and power; one is infinite in power but not in substance, and one is finite on both counts. These people copy, if in a slightly different form, those who use the names "Creator," "Co-worker," and "Minister," alleging that the rank inherent in the names coincides with the quality of the realities.

## 6

We shall not argue with those who deny the Holy Spirit's existence or with pagan chitchat—we must forgo the luxury of the "oil of sinners"[17] and get on with the sermon. With the rest though we shall take issue. The Holy Spirit must be presumed to be either a being existing in its own right or an inherent property of something else—what the subtle here call a "substance" or an "accident"

respectively. If “accident” applies here, the Holy Spirit must be an activity of God. What otherwise, whose otherwise, could it be? The Holy Spirit has, after all, a certain superiority and is unscathed by composition. If an activity, clearly it must be activated, because he has no active power and ceases with the cessation of his production—that is the kind of thing an activity is. How comes it then that he *does* act?[18] He says things,[19] he decrees,[20] he is grieved,[21] he is vexed[22]—all of which belong to a being *with* motion, not to the process of motion. If he is a substance, not the attribute of a substance, he must be taken either as a creature or as God. Not even the inventors of fabulous goat-stags could envisage a halfway being here, or anything that belonged to, or was composed out of, both sides. But if he is a creature why do you believe in him, why are we baptized in him? “Believing *in*” is not the same thing as “believing a fact *about*.” The first applies to God, the second to everything. If he is God, then he is not a “creature,” or a “product” or a “fellow-slave”—none of these lowly names belongs to him at all.

## 7

Now for your say! Let the slings fly and the subtle inferences be drawn!

*The Holy Spirit must either be ingenerate or begotten. If he is ingenerate, there are two unoriginate beings. If he is begotten, we again have alternatives: either begotten from the Father or from the Son. If from the Father, there will be two sons who are brothers.*

Make them twins if you like, or one older than the other, since you have a penchant for corporeal ideas. If he is begotten from the Son, our God apparently has a grandson, and what could be odder than that? We certainly have here the arguments of people “wise to do evil,”[23] but unwilling to write what is good. For my part, if I saw the necessity for the alternatives, I should accept the realities without being put off by the names. But because the Son is “Son” in a more elevated sense of the word, and since we have no other term to express his consubstantial derivation from God, it does not follow that we ought to think it essential to transfer wholesale to the divine sphere the earthly names of human family ties. Do you take it, by the same token, that our God is a male, because of the masculine nouns “God” and “Father”? Is the Godhead a female, because in Greek the word is feminine? Is the word “Spirit” neuter in Greek, because the Spirit is sterile? If you want to take the joke further you could say, as the trashy myths of old did, that God coupled with his own will and fathered the Son. We

should then be faced with the bisexual God of Marcion, who pictured those outlandish aeons.[24]

## 8

But since we do not admit your first dilemma with its assumption that there is no midway term between ingeneracy and generacy, away go your “brothers” and “grandsons” at once along with the pompous dilemma, beating a retreat from theology, dissolved, so to say, along with the dissolution of the first link in the complex chain. Explain to me where you are going to put “procession” which is evidently a mean term between alternatives and was introduced by a better theologian than you, our Savior? I take it that you have not composed a new New Testament and on the strength of it removed the phrase: “The Holy Spirit which proceeds from the Father.”[25] Insofar as he proceeds from the Father, he is no creature; inasmuch as he is not begotten, he is no Son; and to the extent that procession is the mean between ingeneracy and generacy, he is God. Thus God escapes your syllogistic toils and shows himself stronger than your exclusive alternatives. What, then, is “proceeding”? You explain the ingeneracy of the Father and I will give you a biological account of the Son’s begetting and the Spirit’s proceeding—and let us go mad the pair of us for prying into God’s secrets. What competence have we here? We cannot understand what lies under our feet, cannot count the sand in the sea, “the drops of rain or the days of this world,”[26] much less enter into the “depths of God”[27] and render a verbal account of a nature so mysterious, so much beyond words.

## 9

*In what particular, then*, it may be asked, *does the Spirit fall short of being Son? If there were not something missing, he would be Son.*

We say there is no deficiency—God lacks nothing. It is their difference in, so to say, “manifestation” or mutual relationship, which has caused the difference in names. The Son does not fall short in some particular of being Father. Sonship is no defect, yet that does not mean he *is* Father. By the same token, the Father would fall short of being Son—the Father is *not* Son. No, the language here gives no grounds for any deficiency, for any subordination in being. The very facts of not being begotten, of being begotten and of proceeding, give them whatever names are applied to them—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

respectively. The aim is to safeguard the distinctness of the three hypostases within the single nature and quality of the Godhead. The Son is not Father; there is *one* Father, yet he is whatever the Father is. The Spirit is not Son because he is from God; there is *one* Only-begotten.[28] Yet whatever the Son is, he is. The three are a single whole in their Godhead and the single whole is three in personalities.[29] Thus there will be no Sabellian "One," no three to be mischievously divided by our contemporaries.

## 10

*What, then? Is the Spirit God?*

Certainly.

*Is he consubstantial?*

Yes, if he is God.

*Present me then*, someone may say, *with two things from the same source, one a Son, the other not a son but, despite that, of the same substance, and I get God plus God.*

Yes, and you give me one more "God" and grant me God's nature, and I will present you with the same Trinity along with the same names and realities. If there is one God, one supreme nature, where can I find an analogy to show you? Are you looking for one from your environment here in this world? It is a singularly graceless, and not just graceless but a pretty well futile, notion to get a picture of things heavenly from things of earth, of things fixed immutably from this transitory element. As Isaiah says, it is "seeking the living among the dead."[30] All the same, to oblige you, I shall try to get a picture even from this source to give my argument some support. There are, of course, many illustrations I could give (all of which I have resolved to leave out) drawn from natural history, about nature's devices for the production of living things. Some of the facts are known to us all, others only to a few. For example, it is asserted that not only do we have identity and difference in the parents reflected exactly in the offspring, but identical offspring can also result from different parents and *vice versa*. If the story is at all reliable, there is a further kind of parentage when a thing is spontaneously consumed and reproduced. There are, in addition, things that, through nature's munificence, stop being themselves and change, transformed from one living thing into another. Indeed two things of the same substance, one an offspring, the other not an offspring, can be from the same source—an example which is rather more to the point at issue. I will mention

one case, well known to everybody, from human history, before passing on to another subject.

## 11

What was Adam? Something molded by God.[31] What was Eve? A portion of that molded creation.[32] Seth? He was the offspring of the pair.[33] Are they not, in your view, the same thing—the molded creation, the portion, and the offspring? Yes, of course they are. Were they consubstantial? Yes, of course they were. It is agreed, then, that things with a different individual being can be of the same substance. I say this without implying molding or division or anything bodily as regards the Godhead—no quibbler shall get a grip on me again here—but by way of contemplating spiritual realities, here presented on stage as it were. No comparison, indeed, can arrive at the whole truth in its purity.

*What does this amount to?* people will say. *There cannot be two things, one an offspring and the other something else, coming from the single source.*

Why not? Were not Eve and Seth of the same Adam? Whose else? Were they both offspring? Certainly not. Why?—because one was a portion of Adam, the other an offspring. Yet they had a mutual identity—they were both human beings, nobody can gainsay that. You have grasped the possibility of our position by means of human illustrations, so will you stop fighting desperately against the Spirit for your view that he must either be an offspring or not consubstantial and not God? I think it would be as well for you if you did, unless you are extremely determined to argue and fight plain facts.

## 12

*But who worshipped the Spirit?* it might be asked. *Is there any ancient or modern example? Who prays to the Spirit? Where is the scriptural authority for worshipping or praying to him, from where did you get the idea?*

We shall give fuller grounds when we discuss the question of what is not in the Bible, but for the present it will be sufficient for us to say just this: it is the Spirit in whom we worship and through whom we pray. “God,” it says, “is Spirit, and they who worship him must worship him in Spirit and in Truth.”[34] And again: “We do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words.”[35] And again: “I will pray with the Spirit but I will pray with the mind also”[36]—meaning, in mind and spirit.

Worshipping, then, and praying in the Spirit seem to me to be simply the Spirit presenting prayer and worship to himself. Would any inspired, any really knowledgeable man, disapprove of the idea that the worship of one is the worship of all three, in virtue of the equal rank and equal deity inherent in all three? Moreover, I shall not be put off by the argument that all things were, according to Scripture, made by the Son,[37] the Spirit being one of the things included in the "all." What Scripture says is that all things *which were made*,[38] were made by the Son, not all things without further qualification—neither the Father nor all things unmade are included. Prove that the Spirit was made before assigning him to the Son, and grouping him along with creatures. Until you can do that, the inclusive phrase offers your irreligion no comfort. If he was made, he must have been made through Christ—I shall not deny it. But if he was not made, how could he be included in the "all," or have been made through Christ? Stop giving a false dignity to the Father at the expense of the Only-begotten (it is a poor kind of honor, giving him a creature by robbing him of that nobler thing, a Son!) and to the Son at the expense of the Spirit. He is no creator of a fellow-slave like us, but is glorified with a peer in honor. Do not put yourself alongside the Trinity, lst you be banished from the Trinity. Do not truncate the single and equally august nature at any point. Because whichever of the Trinity you destroy, you will have destroyed the whole—or rather, you will have been banished from the whole. It is better to have a meager idea of the union than to venture on total blasphemy.

## 13

Our sermon has reached the fundamental point. Though I lament the reopening now of a long dead enquiry that had yielded to faith, we must nonetheless make a stand against babblers and not allow the case to go by default. The Word is on our side as we plead the Spirit's cause.

*If*, it is asserted, *we use the word "God" three times, must there not be three Gods? How can the object of glorification fail to be a plurality of powers?*

Who are the spokesmen here? Is it the thoroughgoing in irreligion or is it also those of the second class, meaning people fairly sound on the Son? My argument applies to both, but is specially directed to the latter. This is indeed the approach I would adopt towards them. "Though," I should say, "you are in revolt from the Spirit, you worship the Son. What right have you to accuse us of tritheism—are you not ditheists? If you deny worship to the Only-begotten as

well, you clearly align yourselves with our opponents. Why should we deal tenderly with you, as though you were not utterly dead? But if you do revere the Son, if you have that much disposition towards salvation, we shall put a question to you: What defense would you make here, were you charged with ditheism? If you have any words of wisdom, give us an answer and provide us with a way to reply. The very arguments you can use to rebut the accusation of ditheism will suffice for us against the charge of tritheism." Thus we win our case by using the prosecution to plead our cause. Could there be a nobler triumph than that?

## 14

But what is our case, our battle, against both parties alike? We have one God because there is a single Godhead. Though there are three objects of belief, they derive from the single whole and have reference to it. They do not have degrees of being God or degrees of priority over against one another. They are not sundered in will or divided in power. You cannot find there any of the properties inherent in things divisible. To express it succinctly, the Godhead exists undivided in beings divided. It is as if there were a single intermingling of light, which existed in three mutually connected Suns. When we look at the Godhead, the primal cause, the sole sovereignty, we have a mental picture of the single whole, certainly. But when we look at the three in whom the Godhead exists, and at those who derive their timeless and equally glorious being from the primal cause, we have three objects of worship.

## 15

*But what does that amount to?*, they might say. *Do not non-Christians too, according to their more expert theoreticians, hold to a single Godhead, and do not we also hold to a single humanity, the whole human race? Nonetheless they think that there is a plurality of gods and not just one, in the way that there is a plurality of men.*

Yes, but in these cases the universal is only a unity for speculative thought. The individuals are widely separated from one another by time, temperament, and capacity. We human beings are not merely composite; we are mutually opposed and inconsistent even with ourselves. We do not stay exactly the same for one day, let alone a lifetime. In our bodies and in our souls we are ever fluctuating, ever changing. I do not know whether this is true of angels and of

all that exalted nature which comes next after the Trinity, or not. They, though, are not composite, and by their nearness to the crown of beauty are more firmly fixed in their relation to beauty than we are.

## 16

The "gods" and (as they themselves style them) "demons" worshipped by the pagans have no need of *us* to accuse them. They stand convicted by their own theologians of being affected by evil emotions, of being quarrelsome, of being brimful of mischief in all its varieties. They are opposed not simply to one another but also to their first causes, who are called Ocean, Tethys, Phanes, and I do not know what else. To cap it all, one god (according to these theologians) had such a lust for power that he hated his children and so insatiable was his desire to be the father of gods and men alike that he gobbled up all the rest of the gods; the ill-starred meal was then regurgitated. If these are mythical, allegorical tales (as those theologians, trying to avoid the ugly character these stories have, aver), how can they explain the phrase, "All things are thrice divided," the fact that different gods preside over different things and that they have distinct elements under them and different grades?

But this is not the kind of thing we believe. "This portion does not belong to Jacob,"[39] says my theologian. No, each of the Trinity is in entire unity as much with himself as with the partnership, by identity of being and power. This is how we explain the unity to the best of our ability to understand it. If the explanation here is convincing, we ought to thank God for the insight. If not, we should look for a better one.

## 17

I do not know whether we are to take jokingly or seriously the arguments you are using to undermine our account of the unity. Indeed, what is the argument?

*Consubstantial things,* it goes, *are counted together*

—meaning by "counting together," "aggregation into one number."

*Things that are not consubstantial are not counted together. The result is that by your present argument you cannot avoid mentioning three Gods. We run no risk here, since we deny that they are consubstantial*.

Yes, you have relieved yourself of trouble with a single word. Yet you gain a poor kind of victory—it is rather like people hanging themselves because they

are afraid of death. To save yourself the exertion of defending monotheism, you have denied the Godhead and surrendered the point at issue to the enemy. For my part, I will not give up the thing we worship, even if it means some hard work. But I do not see what labor is involved here.

## 18

*Consubstantial things*, you say, *are counted together, but things that are not consubstantial can only be indicated singly.*

What school of mythology did you get that idea from? Do you not know that every number indicates an amount of objects, not their nature? I am old-fashioned enough, or rather, uncouth enough, to use the word "three" of things that amount to three, even if they differ in nature. But I say "one and one and one," at all events so many units, even if the things in question are linked together in their substance. In doing so I am not attending to things, so much as to the *amount* of things referred to in counting them. Since you have such a strong attachment to the written word, despite the fact indeed that you are doing battle with the written word, you shall have my proofs from it. In the book of Proverbs there are three things with a stately walk—a lion, a goat, and a cock; and fourthly, there is a king making a speech amongst his people.[40] I forbear to mention all the other sets of four things listed there, which are different in nature. In addition, I find two cherubim counted singly by Moses.[41] How, according to your system, could those things in the book of Proverbs, which are utterly different in their nature, be "three"? How could the cherubim, which are of the same stock and closely connected, be counted singly? Were I to mention two masters, God and Mammon,[42] counted as one group despite their remoteness from each other, I might well be laughed at even more for my way of counting things together.

## 19

*But*, someone may say, *what I am talking about is things of the same substance being counted together that have nouns, which are mentioned as well, to match them. For example: Three* men, *three* gods*—not three odds and ends.*

What answer are we to make? This is the behavior of a man who lays down the law for words, not one who uses them to speak the truth. What I am talking about is Peter, Paul, and John's not being three or consubstantial, so long as three

Pauls, three Peters, and as many Johns cannot be spoken of. We shall demand that you apply to more specific nouns the new-fangled rule you have kept to in the case of the more generic ones. Or will you break the rule by not conceding whatever rights you have assumed? Why does John in the Catholic Epistles say that there are "three who bear witness, the Spirit, the water, and the blood?"[43] Is he not talking nonsense in your opinion? First, because he has been rash enough to count together things that are not consubstantial—and that right you only allow to things that are consubstantial. Who could call these "of one substance"? Secondly, because he happens to have got his grammar wrong. He puts the Greek word for "three" in the masculine and then tacks on three words in the neuter, in defiance of your definitive rules of grammar. Yet what is the difference between putting "three" in the masculine and tacking on single things in the neuter, and using "one" thrice in the masculine without calling them "three" in the masculine but instead "three" in the neuter? This is the very proposition you reject in the case of the Godhead!

What do we make of the fact that the same Greek word can mean the animal a crab, a pair of tongs, or the sign of the zodiac, Cancer? What about the word that can denote a dog, a dog-fish, or the dog-star in the sky? Do you not agree that people talk about "three crabs" or "three dogs"? Of course you do. Does that mean that they are of the same substance? What man in his senses would assert that? You see how your argument about counting things together has collapsed under the weight of so many proofs to the contrary. If consubstantial things are not always counted together and nonconsubstantial things are counted together, and if in both cases nouns are used along with the numerals, what is left of your doctrinaire pronouncement?

## 20

Let us look at an additional point which lies, I take it, within the present area of discussion. One plus one makes two, and two resolves into one plus one? Yes, of course. So if things added together are consubstantial and things separated are of different substances, what will happen according to you? The same things will have to be *both* consubstantial *and* of different substances. I scorn the way you pride yourself on putting things in numbered lists, as if the realities depended upon the sequence of the names. If that were really the case, what is to prevent the same things, by this argument, being both superior and inferior in worth to themselves, seeing that the same things are sometimes higher up, sometimes

lower down the lists given in the Bible, just because they have an equal natural worth? I find that this same principle applies to “God” and “Lord,” and even more strongly to the prepositions “from,” “through,” and “in,”[44] which you use to make an artificial system of the divinity, saying that

*“from whom” applies to the Father, “through whom” to the Son and “in whom” applies to the Holy Spirit.*[45]

What would you have got up to if each expression *had* been given a fixed allocation? As it is, you use them as a means of introducing such a deal of inequality in rank and nature, despite the fact that it is clear, to those who take the trouble to find out, that the prepositions are used jointly of all three.

That will do for men with at least *some* intelligence! But you have made one assault upon the Spirit and so you find it hard to have your impetus checked. Boars of the fiercer kind find it hard not to struggle on to the finish, and force themselves towards the sword. So do you, till you get its thrust full in you. Come then, let us look at the remainder of your argument.

## 21

Time and time again you repeat the argument about

*not being in the Bible.*

Yet we are dealing here not with a smuggled-in alien, but with something disclosed to the consciousness of men past and present. The fact stands already proved by a host of people who have discussed the subject, all men who read the Holy Scriptures not in a frivolous, cursory way, but with penetration so that they saw inside the written text to its inner meaning. They were found fit to perceive the hidden loveliness; they were illuminated by the light of knowledge. We shall, so far as possible, summarize their views, building on the “foundations of others”[46]—we do not want to appear improperly and extravagantly ambitious. If the fact that the Biblical text does not very clearly or very often call him “God” (as it calls the Father “God,” in the Old Testament, and the Son “God,” in the New Testament) if this fact, I say, is the cause of your blasphemy, your inordinately verbose irreligion, we shall release you from this mischief by a brief disquisition on things and names, with special reference to Biblical usage.

## 22

Some things mentioned in the Bible are not factual; some factual things are not

mentioned; some nonfactual things receive no mention there; some things are both factual and mentioned. Do you ask for my proofs here? I am ready to offer them. In the Bible, God "sleeps,"[47] "wakes up,"[48] "is angered,"[49] "walks,"[50] and has a "throne of cherubim."[51] Yet when has God ever been subject to emotion? When do you ever hear that God is a bodily being? This is a nonfactual, mental picture. We have used names derived from human experience and applied them, so far as we could, to aspects of God. His retirement from us, for reasons known to himself into an almost unconcerned inactivity, is his "sleeping." Human sleeping, after all, has the character of restful inaction. When he alters and suddenly benefits us, that is his "waking up." Waking up puts an end to sleep, just as looking at somebody puts an end to turning away from him. We have made his punishing of us his "being angered"; for with us, punishment is born of anger. His acting in different places, we call "walking," for walking is a transition from one place to another. His abiding among the heavenly powers, making them almost his haunt, we call his "sitting" and "being enthroned"; this too is human language: the divine abides in none as it abides in the saints. God's swift motion we call "flight";[52] his watching over us is his "face";[53] his giving and receiving is his "hand."[54] Indeed every faculty or activity of God has given us a corresponding picture in terms of something bodily.

## 23

Again, where do you get those fortresses of yours, "Ingenerate" and "Unoriginate" from—or we the term "Immortal," come to that? Show us the express words or we cross them out as unscriptural, and you will be dead as a result of your own principles, since the words, the wall of defense you trusted in,[55] will have been destroyed. Is it not plain that these terms are derived from passages that imply, without actually mentioning them? The passages? What about: "I am the first and I am hereafter"[56] and "Before me there is no other God and after me there shall be none"[57] for all "is-ness"[58] (God is saying) is mine, without beginning or ending? You have taken the truths that there is nothing before God and that he has no prior cause, and given him the titles "unoriginate" and "ingenerate." The fact that there is no halt to his ongoing existence means he is "immortal" and "indestructible."

The first two pairs stand accounted for. But what of the nonfactual things not mentioned in the Bible—such as "deity is evil," "a sphere has four corners"

or “man is not a compound”? Do you know anybody who has reached such a pitch of insanity as to venture to think, or show that he thinks, anything like that?

It remains then to exemplify things which are *both* factual *and* mentioned: “God,” “man,” “angel,” “judgment,” and “futility”—which is what your deductive arguments are, besides being an overthrowing of “the faith” and an emptying of “the mystery.”[59]

## 24

There really is a great deal of diversity inherent in names and things, so why are you so dreadfully servile to the letter, so much the partisan of Jewish lore, following the syllables while you let the realities go? Supposing you mention “twice five” or “twice seven” and I infer from your words “ten” or “fourteen,” or suppose from your mentioning a “rational, mortal animal” I draw the conclusion a “man,” would you allege I was talking rubbish? How could I be? I am saying what *you* said. The words belong just as much to the man who infers the logical grounds for using them as they do to their actual user. In the examples I have just given I should be considering meanings rather than words, and so, in the same way, if I hit upon something meant, though not mentioned, or not stated in clear terms, by Scripture, I should not be put off by your quibbling charge about names—I should give expression to the meaning. This is how we shall make our stand against people whose views are only half right!

I cannot say as much to you. You deny so many really crystal-clear titles belonging to the Son that it is evident you would not respect them even if you got to know a host of even plainer ones. I shall go on now to take the argument a short stage further back and explain to you (experts though you are supposed to be) the reason for all this concealment.

## 25

There have been two remarkable transformations of the human way of life in the course of the world’s history. These are called two “covenants,” and, so famous was the business involved, two “shakings of the earth.”[60] The first was the transition from idols to the Law;[61] the second, from the Law to the Gospel.[62] The Gospel also tells of the third “shaking,” the change from this present state of things to what lies unmoved, unshaken,[63] beyond. An identical feature occurs in both covenants. The feature? They were not suddenly changed, even at the first

moment the changes were put in hand. We need to know why. It was so that we should be persuaded, not forced. The unspontaneous is the impermanent—as when force is used to keep streams or plants in check. The spontaneous both lasts longer and is more secure. It belongs to despotic power to use force; it is a mark of God's reasonableness that the issue should be ours. God thought it wrong to do men good against their will but right to benefit those with a mind to it. For this reason, he acts like a schoolmaster or doctor, taking away some ancestral customs, allowing others. He yields on some trifles which make for happiness, just as physicians do with the sick to get the medicine taken along with the sweeter ingredients artfully blended in. A departure from time-honored, customary ways is, after all, not easy. Am I making my point? The first change cut away idols but allowed sacrifices to remain; the second stripped away sacrifices but did not forbid circumcision. Then, when people had been reconciled to the withdrawal, they agreed to let go what had been left them as a concession. Under the first covenant that concession was sacrifice, and they became Jews instead of Gentiles; under the second, circumcision—and they became Christians instead of Jews, brought round gradually, bit by bit, to the Gospel. Paul shall convince you here. He progressed from circumcising[64] and keeping ceremonial cleansings[65] tothe point of declaring, "But if I, brethren, preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted?"[66] His earlier conduct was an accommodation to circumstance; his later conduct belonged to the full truth.

## 26

I can make a comparison here with the progress of the doctrine of God, except that the order is exactly the reverse. In the former case change arose from omissions; here, growth towards perfection comes through additions. In this way, the old covenant made clear proclamation of the Father, a less definite one of the Son. The new covenant made the Son manifest[67] and gave us a glimpse of the Spirit's Godhead. At the present time, the Spirit resides amongst us, giving us a clearer manifestation of himself than before. It was dangerous for the Son to be preached openly when the Godhead of the Father was still unacknowledged. It was dangerous, too, for the Holy Spirit to be made (and here I use a rather rash expression) an extra burden, when the Son had not been received. It could mean men jeopardizing what did lie within their powers, as happens to those encumbered with a diet too strong for them or who gaze at sunlight with eyes as yet too feeble for it. No, God meant it to be by piecemeal additions, "ascents"[68]

as David called them, by progress and advance from glory to glory,[69] that the light of the Trinity should shine upon more illustrious souls. This was, I believe, the motive for the Spirit's making his home in the disciples in gradual stages proportionate to their capacity to receive him—at the outset of the gospel when he performs miracles,[70] after the Passion when he is breathed into the disciples,[71] after the Ascension when he appears in fiery tongues.[72] He was gradually revealed by Jesus also, as you too can substantiate by a more careful reading. "I will ask the Father," he says, "and he will send you another Comforter, the Spirit of Truth"[73]—intending that the Spirit should not appear to be a rival God and spokesman of another power. Later he says: "He will send him in my name"[74]—leaving out "I will ask" but retaining "He will send." Later on he says: "I shall send"[75]—indicating the Son's own rank; and later: "He will come"[76]—indicating the Spirit's power.

## 27

You see how light shines on us bit by bit, you see in the doctrine of God an order, which we had better observe, neither revealing it suddenly nor concealing it to the last. To reveal it suddenly would be clumsy, would shock outsiders. Ultimately to conceal it would be a denial of God, would make outsiders of our own people. Let me add to these remarks a thought which well may have occurred to others already, but which I suspect of being a product of my own mind. The Savior had certain truths which he said could not at that time be borne by the disciples,[77] filled though they had been with a host of teachings. These truths, for reasons I well may have mentioned, were therefore concealed. He also said that we should be taught "all things" by the Holy Spirit,[78] when he made his dwelling in us. One of these truths I take to be the *Godhead* of the Spirit, which becomes clear at a later stage, when the knowledge is timely and capable of being taken in, when after our Savior's return to heaven, it is, because of that miracle, no longer an object of disbelief. What greater truth could the Son promise or the Spirit teach than this one? If any promise or teaching ought to be deemed great, this ought.

## 28

Thus do I stand, thus may I stand, and those I love as well, on these issues, able

to worship the Father as God, the Son as God, the Holy Spirit as God—"three personalities, one Godhead undivided in glory, honor, substance, and sovereignty," as one inspired saint of recent times wisely expressed it.[79] May he who does not stand thus, who is a time-serving turncoat, irresolute on matters of most import—may such a man, as Scripture has it, "not see the day star rising"[80] nor the glory of its heavenly brilliance! Were the Spirit not to be worshipped, how could he deify me through baptism? If he is to be worshipped, why not adored? And if to be adored, how can he fail to be God? One links with the other, a truly golden chain of salvation. From the Spirit comes our rebirth,[81] from rebirth comes a new creating, from new creating a recognition of the worth of him who effected it.

## 29

Yes, this is what one can say on the premise that *it is not in the Bible.*

But now you shall have a swarm of proof-texts, from which the Godhead of the Holy Spirit can be proved thoroughly scriptural at least to those not utterly dense or utterly alien to the Spirit. Look at the facts: Christ is born, the Spirit is his forerunner;[82] Christ is baptized, the Spirit bears him witness;[83] Christ is tempted, the Spirit leads him up;[84] Christ performs miracles, the Spirit accompanies him;[85] Christ ascends, the Spirit fills his place.[86] Is there any significant function belonging to God, which the Spirit does not perform? Is there any title belonging to God, which cannot apply to him, except "ingenerate" and "begotten"? The Father and the Son, after all, continue to have their personalities; there must be no confusion with the Godhead, which brings all other things into harmonious order. I shudder to think of the wealth of titles, the mass of names, outraged by resistance to the Spirit. He is called "Spirit of God,"[87] "Spirit of Christ,"[88] "Mind of Christ,"[89] "Spirit of the Lord,"[90] and "Lord"[91] absolutely; "Spirit of Adoption,"[92] "of Truth,"[93] "of Freedom";[94] "Spirit of Wisdom," "Understanding," "Counsel," "Might," "Knowledge," "True Religion" and of "The Fear of God."[95] The Spirit indeed effects all these things, filling the universe with his being, sustaining the universe. His being "fills the world,"[96] his power is beyond the world's capacity to contain it. It is his nature, not his given function, to be good,[97] to be righteous[98] and to be in command.[99] He is the subject, not the object, of hallowing,[100] apportioning,[101] participating,[102] filling, sustaining;[103] we share in him and he shares in

nothing.[104] He is our inheritance,[105] he is glorified,[106] counted together with Father and Son;[107] he is a dire warning to us.[108] The "finger of God,"[109] he i, like God, a "fire,"[110] which proves, I think, that he is consubstantial. The Spirit it is who created[111] and creates anew through baptism[112] and resurrection.[113] The Spirit it is who knows all things,[114] who teaches all things,[115] who blows where, and as strongly as, he wills,[116] who leads,[117] speaks, sends out, separates,[118] who is vexed[119] and tempted.[120] He reveals,[121] illumines,[122] gives life—or, rather, is absolutely Light and Life.[123] He makes us his temple,[124] he deifies, he makes us complete,[125] and he initiates us in such a way that he both precedes baptism[126] and is wanted after it.[127] All that God actively performs, he performs.[128] Divided in fiery tongues,[129] he distributes graces,[130] makes Apostles, prophets,[131] evangelists, pastors, and teachers.[132] He is "intelligent, manifold, clear, distinct, irresistible, unpolluted"[133]—or in other words, he is utterly wise, his operations are multifarious,[134] he clarifies all things distinctly, his authority is absolute and he is free from mutability. He is "all-powerful, overseeing all and penetrating through all spirits that are intelligent and pure and most subtle"[135]—meaning, I think, angelic powers as well as prophets and Apostles. He penetrates them simultaneously, though they are distributed in various places;[136] which shows that he is not tied down by spatial limitations.

## 30

Men who speak and teach thus, who use the expression "another Comforter"[137] with almost the meaning "an additional God," men who are conscious that blasphemy against him is uniquely unpardonable,[138] who so frighteningly placarded the guilty Ananias and Sapphira, when they lied to the Spirit, as "liars to God not to man"[139]—are those men, in your opinion, preaching that the Holy Spirit is God or that he is something else? You must be literally impenetrable, utterly unspiritual, if you feel any hesitancy here or need any further instruction.

Yes, the titles are so many and so striking, what need have you of texts in full quotation? All the less exalted expressions which talk of his being given,[140] sent,[141] divided,[142] or his being a grace,[143] a gift,[144] an inspiration,[145] a promise,[146] a means of intercession[147] or anything else of the same character—all these are to be referred back to the Primal Cause, as indicating the Spirit's

source and preventing a polytheistic belief in three separate causes. It is equally irreligious to make them a combined persona, like Sabellius, as disconnected natures like the Arians.

31

For my part, though I have examined the question in private so busily and so often, searching from all points of view for an illustration of this profound matter, I have failed to find anything in this world with which I might compare the divine nature. If a faint resemblance comes my way, the more significant aspect escapes me, leaving me and my illustration here in this world. I had the idea, indeed others have had it too, of a source, a spring, and a river, and asked myself whether there were not something here corresponding with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. There is no temporal separation here, no disruption of mutual connection, even if they appear to be parted by three distinctions of personality. But I had two fears: first, of admitting the idea of an incessant stream of Deity; and second, that the illustration might import the suggestion of a numerical unit—source, spring, and river, though different in form, count as one thing.

32

Another illustration I pondered over was that of Sun, beam, and light. But here again there was the danger, first of imagining in the incomposite nature the sort of composition which belongs to the Sun and its inherent properties, and second, of making the Father a substance but the others potentialities of God inherent in him, not actual beings. Beam and light are not extra Suns, but emanations from the Sun, substantial qualities. To think thus is thereby to attribute to God, insofar as the illustration suggests the idea, both being *and* nonbeing—and that is a greater absurdity than the previous suggestions. I once heard a man describe it in terms of a sunbeam's throwing its radiance on to a wall and quivering through the movement of some water, a movement transmitted through the intervening air and caught by the beam.[148] Checked by the resistance of the wall, it became an oscillation, surprising in its rapidity: as much a manifold as a unity, joining and parting too quickly for the eye to catch hold of.

33

However, this illustration too was unacceptable to me. First, because it was quite clear what had set the sunbeam in motion, whereas nothing is prior to God to be his mover—he is cause of all and owns no prior cause. Second, because there is in this example a hint of those very things which are inconceivable in the case of God—composition, dispersion, and the lack of a fixed, natural stability. In a word, there is nothing to satisfy my mind when I try to illustrate the mental picture I have, except gratefully taking part of the image and discarding the rest. So, in the end, I resolved that it was best to say "goodbye" to images and shadows, deceptive and utterly inadequate as they are to express the reality. I resolved to keep close to the more truly religious view and rest content with some few words, taking the Spirit as my guide and, in his company and in partnership with him, safeguarding to the end the genuine illumination I had received from him, as I strike out a path through this world. To the best of my powers I will persuade all men to worship Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as the single Godhead and power, because to him belong all glory, honor, and might for ever and ever.[149] Amen.

## Notes

[1] Cf. Jn 8:59; Lk 4:30.

[2] Origen and contemporaries like Basil.

[3] Ps 13:5 [LXX]; 53(52):5(6).

[4] Cf. Mt 7:15.

[5] Jn 1:9.

[6] Jn 14:16 and 26.

[7] Ps 36(35):9(10).

[8] Cf. Jn 1:5.

[9] Cf. Is 21:2.

[10] Is 40:9.

[11] 1 Jn 1:1.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Cf. 2 Pet 1:4, Mt 28:19.

[15] No precise references have been found, but for the second phrase cf. Aristotle *De generatione animalium* 736b. Plotinus and the Neoplatonists knew a sort of Trinity and to this Gregory here appeals.

[16] No names can be attached to the views, except Origen's to the notion that the Spirit is created. See below para 7.

17 Ps 141(140):5.

18 1 Cor 12:11.

19 Acts 13:2.

20 Ibid.

21 Eph 4:30.

22 Is 63:10.

23 Jer 4:22.

24 The second-century heresiarch Marcion is not elsewhere recorded as teaching anything of the kind.

25 Jn 15:26.

26 Sir 1:2.

27 1 Cor 2:10.

28 Jn 1:14.

29 Cf. paras 28, 29, and 31. The term (*idiotetes*) used here and in a number of other passages by Gregory as a synonym of *hypostases*, or "subjects," can be translated *properties* and was to cause confusion for Gregory's later exegetes with the use of the expression "characteristic properties," viz. the distinctive "fatherhood" and "ingeneracy" of the Father, the "generacy" or "filiality" of the Son, and the "procession" of the Holy Spirit.

30 Is 8:19.

31 Gen 2:7.

32 Gen 2:21–23.

33 Gen 4:25.

34 Jn 4:24.

35 Rom 8:26.

36 1 Cor 14:15.

37 Jn 1:3.

38 Ibid.

39 Jer 10:16.

40 Cf. Prov 30:29–31

41 Ex 25:18.

42 Mt 6:24.

43 1 Jn 5:7–8.

44 Cf. Rom 11:36.

45 A large part of Basil's *On the Holy Spirit* is concerned with the rebuttal of this alleged distinction. Basil drew back from calling the Spirit either "God" directly or "consubstantial," since "God" is not scriptural and "consubstantial" is not used of the Spirit in the Nicene Creed.

46 Rom 15:20.

47 E.g. Ps 44(43):23(24).

48 Jer 31(38):26.

49 Ps 79(78):5; cf. Is 5:25.

50 Gen 3:8.

51 Is 37:16; Ps 80(79):1(2).

52 E.g. Ps 18(17):10(11).

53 Ps 4:6(7); 34(33):16(17).

54 Ps 145(144):16.

55 Cf. Ps 31(30):2(3).

56 Is 44:6.

57 Is 43:10.

58 Cf. Ex 3:14.

59 Cf. Rom 4:14; 1 Cor 1:17; 1 Tim 3:9.

60 Heb 12:26–27; Hag 2:6; Mt 27:51.

61 Ex 203–5.

62 Cf. Mt 27:51; Heb 9:3–15; Gal 2:14ff.

63 Heb 12:18.

64 Acts 16:3.

65 Acts 21:26.

66 Gal 5:11.

67 Cf. 1 Pet 1:20.

68 Ps 83:6 [LXX].

69 2 Cor 3:18.

70 Mt 10:1; Mk 6:7; Lk 9:1.

71 Jn 20:22.

72 Acts 2:3.

73 Jn 14:16–17.

74 Jn 14:26.

75 Jn 15:26 and 16:7.

76 Ibid.

77 Jn 16:12.

78 Jn 14:26 and 16:13.

79 Gregory the Wonderworker, the distinguished pupil of Origen and hero of the faith for Basil, from whose (alleged) creedal exposition this is an inexact quotation.

80 Job 3:9.

81 Jn 3:3–5; Mt 28:19.

82 Cf. Lk 1:31 and 3.

83 Mt 3:13–17; Lk 3:21–22.
84 Mt 4:1; Lk 4:2.
85 Mt 12:22 and 28.
86 Acts 1:9 and 2:3–4.
87 1 Cor 2:11.
88 Rom 8:9.
89 1 Cor 2:14–16.
90 2 Cor 3:17.
91 Ibid.
92 Rom 8:15.
93 Jn 14:17.
94 2 Cor 3:17.
95 Is 11:2–3.
96 Wis 1:7.
97 Ps 143(142):10.
98 Ps 51(50):10(12).
99 Ps 50:14 [LXX].
100 1 Cor 6:11.
101 Jn 3:34.
102 Cf. Rom 8:15; Phil 2:1.
103 Wis 1:7.
104 Ibid.
105 Eph 1:13–14.
106 1 Cor 6:19–20.
107 1 Jn 5:7–8 [variant reading]; cf. Mt 28:19.
108 Mk 3:29.
109 Lk 11:20.
110 Acts 2:3–4; Deut 4:24.
111 Ps 104(103):30.
112 Jn 3:5; cf. 1 Cor 12:13.
113 Ezek 37:5–14.
114 1 Cor 2:10.
115 Jn 14:26.
116 Jn 3:8.
117 Ps 143(142):10.
118 Acts 13:2–4.

119 Cf. Job 4:9.

120 Acts 5:9.

121 1 Cor 2:10; cf. Jn 16:13.

122 Cf. Jn 14:26.

123 Jn 6:63; Rom 8:10.

124 Cf. 1 Cor 3:16, 6:11.

125 Cf. Jn 16:12–13

126 Cf. Acts 10:47.

127 Acts 8:14–17.

128 1 Cor 12:4 and 11.

129 Acts 2:3.

130 Eph 4:11.

131 Wis 7:27.

132 Eph 4:4 and 11.

133 Wis 7:21.

134 1 Cor 12:11.

135 Wis 7:23.

136 Wis 8:1.

137 Jn 14:16.

138 Mt 12:31.

139 Acts 5:1–11.

140 Lk 11:13.

141 Jn 16:7.

142 Heb 2:4.

143 1 Cor 12:9 and 30.

144 Acts 2:38.

145 Jn 20:22.

146 Lk 24:49; Acts 1:4; Gal 3:14.

147 Rom 8:26.

148 The man is not named by Gregory, though the comparison is perhaps Stoic in origin, with reference to the volatility of the mind.

149 Rev 1:6.

# The Two Letters to Cledonius: An Introduction

## The background

The background to these two letters, which are in effect theological treatises, is different from that of the Five Theological Orations. We find Gregory retired from his post, temporary as it turned out, as bishop of Constantinople, and now (382) attempting to regulate the affairs of what might be called the "family parish" at Nazianzus. He had tried to secure a bishop for it, but his episcopal colleagues had disallowed an election. On medical advice, so he says (Ep. 125), he had gone to the spa at Xanxaris and was endeavoring to keep a grip on parish affairs by post. The priest and recipient of these letters, Cledonius, was evidently acting as Gregory's deputy. At the spa Gregory heard the unwelcome news that a group of supporters of Apollinarius, the formerly distinguished but now generally discredited bishop and theologian, had installed a bishop of their persuasion in succession to himself. No doubt they claimed that here was a part of the Lord's vineyard, vacant through illness and urgently requiring pastoral attention. Gregory's first letter to Cledonius tells us how they presented themselves: as fully acceptable canonically and *personae gratae* to the Western Church. Their teaching is, they claim, entirely orthodox and in accordance with the standard of the creed of Nicaea. However, the interpretation of the creed needs, according to them, to be brought up to date in view of recent controversy about how the humanity of Christ is to be understood. Gregory, they seem to be inferring, has dragged his feet here; he will not discuss the new christological agenda though he is alleged to be entirely in sympathy with the views of Apollinarius. The burden of the first letter is to respond to these claims: the Apollinarians have not been accepted by the West; and Gregory's understanding of the "at-one-ment" of Godhead and manhood in Christ, however much it shares with Apollinarius', differs on the fundamental question of the human mind in Christ, the presence of whch Apollinarius denies.

The reasoning behind this characteristic teaching of Apollinarius is given in Gregory's rebuttal of it, as the reader of these letters will readily see, and this is not the place in which to expound in detail the peculiar contribution of Apollinarius to the development of the doctrine of the person of Christ. The reader, it goes without saying, will not take at face value all that Gregory has to say about Apollinarius' errors, for when polemics enters, objective discussion

flies out of the window and there is a great deal more to be said on Apollinarius' behalf than Gregory allows for. A less biased assessment may permit us to put it something like this: Apollinarius' christology turns upon two ideas: the fundamental frailty and corruption of the human mind and will; and the unity and uniqueness of Christ. If we make the requisite interpretative allowances, we could say that Apollinarius holds, so far as the first idea is concerned, to a strong form of what was to become known in the West as a doctrine of the depravity of human nature. As a result of the first sin, the human mind and will have become totally corrupt. Now since for Apollinarius, as for patristic theologians in general, the grace of God is God in person, it follows that in Christ, the model and medium for redemption, grace predominates and excludes any inheritable defect. The grave disadvantage of Apollinarius' expression of his teaching lay, so Gregory in these letters tersely but decisively argues, in its rejection of a fundamental principle of Christian thought. It is present in germ in the New Testament ("Christ the same yesterday, today and for ever") and was invoked by that most profound of early Christian theologians, Irenaeus (c. 130–200): we may call it the principle of the Universal Relevance of Christ. Christ touched and made his own (Gregory says "assumed") all the human conditin in all its aspects. To deny Christ a human mind is therefore to cut the human mind off from the redeeming power of God. As for the second principle, it seems likely that Apollinarius developed his teaching in dialectic with that of Diodore of Tarsus (died c. 390), who certainly taught that the eternal Son of God and the son of Mary were distinct subjects. Diodore's reasoning does not now concern us. It is enough to say that he intended so to expound Christ's Godhead that the truth of his humanity did not obscure it. But a teaching of "two sons" negates the narrative of redemption that the Church of the fourth century had inherited and presupposed. "One Lord Jesus Christ," it said in the Nicene Creed, who "was fleshed and humanized" (it is not possible to render into English these verbal Greek forms). There could be no question of the co-existence of two theoretically independent subjects. As Athanasius put it in his celebrated letter to Epictetus, the Trinity did not become a Quaternity of Father, Son, Holy Spirit and Jesus. For Apollinarius, to rule out two sons and two subjects in Christ it was necessary to rule out also two minds: a notion that, in any case, appeared to Apollinarius to contain an absurdity. Gregory accepted the premise but declined the alleged implication. The ten anathematisms he here sets out in this first letter are directed for the most part at "Diodoran" views. He has been invited to state his case and opposes the "dualism" of one side as firmly as the "monism" of the

other.

The second letter has no introductory address and seems to be a sort of appendage to the first, reinforcing its main points and giving a concise declaration of Gregory's position (para. 2). It adds a little to the rebuttal of the charge that Gregory has been ambivalent in first accepting and then rejecting a profession of faith by the Apollinarian bishop Vitalius. Otherwise, it seems to arise out of the same circumstances and to reflect no change of audience. In one manuscript tradition the order and numbering of the letters is reversed for no apparent reason.

## A Guide by Way of Summary to the Two Letters

### *Letter One*

After the formal greeting, Gregory complains that the faithful are being disturbed by novel and false teaching, and that he has not been given prior notice of the issues or a chance to debate them with their proponents; his authority as a theologian of proven faith ought to have been respected [1f]. It is being claimed that Gregory approves the views in question and that the followers of Apollinarius are in communion with bishop Damasus of Rome; let them produce the appropriate certificates! [3]. Gregory in a pregnant phrase states his faith in the one God and Son [4], and proclaims ten anathematisms that clarify it: two Sons of God are excluded but so finally and emphatically is the notion of a Christ without a human mind [5]. Three objections are rebutted: "The deity compensated for the humanity"—but that means an incomplete incarnation; "Christ cannot comprise two complete entities"—but that is to assume that they are corporeal entities [6f]; "the human mind is inherently evil"—in which case it requires healing just as much as the flesh, and, moreover, it is the mind which is the mediating element between Godhead and material flesh [8]. God took on flesh not merely to communicate with, but to save, humanity, and especially the primary sinful element in it [9]. Absurd negligence on God's part is being suggested [10]. "Flesh" is used in Scripture by synecdoche, or to indicate the depth of Christ's self-abnegation [11f.]. Gregory now moves to the attack: Apollinarius is reintroducing the old Law; even his teaching on the Trinity is unsound [13f.]. Gregory returns to the opening theme: he is not in communion with the Apollinarian heretics; he shuns uncritical innovation in doctrine and has been drawn into this unwelcome debate by necessity [15]. Gregor demands

respect for himself and recalls that he too has claims to be a poet [16].

*Letter Two*

Cledonius has been asked for a reasoned ruling on a question of doctrine and has referred the matter to Gregory. Gregory declares his standard to be the Nicene Creed as expanded in its teaching on the Holy Spirit [1]. On the point at issue, Gregory first affirms Christ as the one Son [2]. His main objection to the Apollinarian teaching is the denial of a human mind to Christ; his apparent wavering over communion with the Apollinarians was due to their prevarication: Christ, they admit, has soul, reason, and mind, but these are alleged to be divine substitutes not properly human elements [3]. They interpret the biblical texts to fit the theory [4], and with their coarse view of flesh goes a coarse millenarianism [5]. He took Vitalius' profession of faith, as did Damasus, in a devout sense and was similarly deceived [6]. They pose the silly dilemma: should we worship God-clad man or man-clad God? Does this indicate an important new discovery of the 370s? [7]. How absurd that they discriminate the lower and higher aspects of Christ and then accuse their opponents of dividing him into mutually hostile natures! [8]. Gregory ends by disclaiming any desire for controversy, but in this case consensus with Apollinarians is excluded [9].

# LETTER 101
# The First Letter to Cledonius the Presbyter

1. Greetings in the Lord from Gregory to his very precious and God-beloved brother and fellow-presbyter Cledonius.

2. We want to learn what the piece of novelty going round the Church is. Its effect is to let every "passer-by" (to used the biblical phrase)[1] scatter[2] the well-ordered flock at will, despoil it in stealthy onslaughts, or, rather rustle it by outrageous teachings. If the present attackers had indeed any matter of faith to condemn us on they ought not to have ventured upon such a charge in such a way without notice. There ought first to have been an attempt at persuasion or a willingness to be persuaded, since even we have some reputation for fearing God, for laboring on behalf of the Word and for having benefited the Church. At that point, if there had indeed to be any innovating, those who offered the insult might have had an excuse. But since our faith has been proclaimed both out loud and in writing, both in this place and further afield, both in danger and out of danger, why do some undertake such attacks while others take no notice?

3. Dreadful though it is if they instill their own perverse views into more naïve souls by the agency of more mischievous people, it is not so dreadful as their telling the lie that we share their views and their sentiments. They bait the hook and use it as a device to accomplish their base intent, making our simplicity, in regarding them as brothers and no less, fuel for their mischief. Not only that: they are saying, I understand, that they have been accepted by the Western council, which, as everybody knows, had earlier condemned them.[3] If the Apollinarians indeed were accepted, either just now or in the past, they are to prove the fact and we shall acquiesce. Clearly they will have agreed with orthodox belief: their success will have been entirely contingent on so doing. But they must demonstrate the fact either by a decree of the council or by letters of communion: that is the rule of councils. But if this is just words, an invention to lend them specious dignity and allow them, by using reliable characters, to take advantage of the credulity of ordinary folk, instruct them to be silent and rebut them. It is our opinion that doing so would be entirely appropriate to your manner of life and your soundness in doctrine.

4. People are not to deceive, nor are they to be deceived, into accepting a human being without a mind as the, in their language, "Lordly Man,"[4] but to use

better language, as “our Lord and God.” For we do not part the human being from the Godhead; no, we affirm and teach one and the same God and Son, at first not man but alone and pre-eternal,[5] unmixed with body and all that belongs to the body, but finally human being too, assumed for our salvation, the same passible in flesh, impassible in Godhead, bounded in body, boundless in spirit, earthly and heavenly, visible and known spiritually, finite and infinite: so that by the same, whole man and God, the whole human being fallen under sin might be fashioned anew.

5. Whoever does not accept Holy Mary as the Mother of God has no relation with the Godhead.[6]

Whoever says that he was channeled, as it were, through the Virgin but not formed within her divinely and humanly (“divinely” because without a husband, “humanly” because by law of conception) is likewise godless.

Whoever says the human being was formed and then God put him on to wear him is condemned: this is not God’s birth but the avoidance of birth.

Whoever imports two “sons,” one from God the Father, a second from the mother and not one and the same Son, loses the adoption[7] promised to those who believe aright. Two natures there are, God and man (since there are both soul and body), but not two “sons” or two “Gods”; though Paul spoke of the “inner” and “outer” man,[8] we are not dealing with two human beings. In sum: the constituents of our Savior are different *things* (since invisible and visible, timeless and temporal, are not the same), but not different *people*—God forbid! The pair is one by coalescence, God being “in-manned” and man “deified”—or however we are to put it.[9] I say “different things” meaning the reverse of what is the case in the Trinity. There we have “others” in order not to confuse the subjects or hypostases, but not other *things*: the three are one and the same thing *qua* Godhead.

Whoever speaks of “activation by grace” as happens in a prophet, but does not speak of “joining” and “being joined” is devoid of the higher kind of action and full, rather, of its contrary.[10]

Whoever does not worship the Crucified is to be anathema and ranked with the God-slaughterers.[11]

Whoever says he was made perfect by his works, or that, in the way the heathen intrude aliens into the civil register, he was deemed worthy of adoption after his baptism or after his resurrection from the dead, is to be anathema: what begins, or progresses or is rendered complete is not God; even though he is

spoken of in this way owing to his gradual self-disclosure.[12]

Whoever says his flesh has now been discarded and his Godhead denuded of body, but denies that he exists along with what he assumed and will come with it, will not see the glory of the Parousia. Where is his body now, if not with the one who assumed it? It was not, after all, stored away in the Sun, along the lines of the Manichees' ravings, to be honored with dishonor. Nor was it dispersed in the atmosphere and dissolved like living sound or perfume fading away or lightning speeding without stay. What are we to make of his being handled after his resurrection,[13] or of his being seen at some future time by those who have pierced him?[14] Godhead, indeed, is of itself invisible. Yet he will come, along with his body I say, just such an one as he was when seen or revealed for the benefit of the disciples on the mount,[15] the Godhead predominating over frail flesh. We repudiate suspicion by saying the latter just as we correct innovation by writing the former.[16]

Whoever says that his flesh descended from heaven,[17] but had no source here amongst us, is to be anathema. "The second man from heaven,"[18] "As the heavenly such also the heavenly,"[19] "No one has ascended into heaven save him who descended from heaven, the son of man,"[20] and any other texts of this kind are to be reckoned as applying to the union with the heavenly in the same way as "Through Christ all things have come into being,"[21] and "Christ dwells in our hearts"[22]: not in terms of God made manifest but of God as he is experienced only by the mind. Just as the natures are blended[23] so too are the titles which mutually transfer by the principle of their natural togetherness.[24]

Whoever has set his hope on a human being without mind is actually mindless himself and unworthy of being saved in his entirety. The unassumed is the unhealed, but what is united with God is also being saved. Had half of Adam fallen, what was assumed and is being saved would have been half too; but if the whole fell he is united to the whole of what was born and is being saved wholly. They are not, then, to begrudge us our entire salvation or to fit out a Savior with only bones and sinews and the picture of a human being. If the human being is without a soul—why, that is what the Arians say too, intending to apply the suffering to the Godhead, the mover of the body also being the sufferer! If he has a soul, but if he has no mental consciousness, can he be human? Man is not an animal without mind! The form, "the tabernacle," must have been human, but the soul might be a horse's soul or a cow's or some other unintelligent beast's.

That, at any rate, will be what is being saved! I was cheated by the Truth. One does the bragging, another got the honor. But if the human being is mentally conscious, if he is not without mind, they are to stop behaving in so actually mindless a way.

6. *But the Godhead made up for the mind*, they say. So what is that to me? Godhead with only flesh, or even with only soul, or with both of them, is not man if lacking mind which is the even better part of man. So keep the human being whole and mix in the Godhead, so that you may benefit me completely. *But he does not have room for two complete things*, they say, well, no, since you are looking at them from a bodily point of view. A pint-sized pot does not have room for a quart, and space for one body will not accommodate two or more bodies. But if you are looking at them as things ideal and incorporeal, notice that I myself have had room for soul, reason and mind, and Holy Spirit as well, and that before me the cosmos, this structure, I mean, of visibles and invisibles had room for the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is the nature of things ideal to be mixed with one another and with bodies in an indivisible and incorporeal way. After all, one person's hearing can accommodate several sounds, several people's eyes the same sights, several noses the same smells, without the senses being cramped or squeezed by one another or the things "sensed" being diminished by the amount of perception.

7. Where is there a human or angelic mind that is so complete a thing in comparison with the Godhead's mind that the presence of the greater squeezes out the other? A beam in comparison with the Sun, a drop of moisture in comparison with a river, are not so complete that we must get rid of the small—beam from a house, moisture from the ground—ere we can accommodate the larger and more complete. Let us consider the way a house can have room for two complete things—the Sun's radiance and the Sun—or the earth for some moisture and a river: the matter deserves a good deal of thought. Do they not know that a thing relatively complete when compared with one thing is incomplete when compared with something else (a hill, say, with a mountain, a grain of mustard with a bean or some other large seed), even if it is called "larger" than its fellows? Or, if you like, an angel compared with God, a man with an angel? Our mind, therefore, is a complete thing, governing the soul and body, but not absolutely complete; it is God's servant and under his control, neither a partner in government nor an equal in worth. Moses too, after all, was, as the Bible puts it, "God" to Pharaoh[25] though he was God's minister.[26] The stars light up in the night but are so hidden by the Sun that by day even their

existence goes unnoticed. A little lamp next to a blazing pyre does not go out, does not shine out, nor does it part company with the pyre; no, the stronger prevails and all is pyre.

8. *But our mind is damned*, they say. What about the flesh? Is not that damned? You should either get rid of the flesh on account of its sin, or add mind for the sake of its salvation. If the meaner element has been assumed so that it may be hallowed by the "fleshing," will not the higher be assumed so that it may be hallowed by "inmanning"? If, my clever friends, the clay has been leavened and a "new lump"[27] created, will not the image be leavened and be blended anew with God, deified by the Godhead? We shall add this: If the mind has been utterly disdained as productive of sin and damned, and that is why body has been assumed and mind left out, those whose offenses involve their minds have an excuse, since the testimony of God has clearly shown their untreatability. Shall I mention the major point? You, my good sir, abuse my mind like the "flesh-worshipper" you are (since I am a "man-worshipper"!), meaning to bind a God, incapable of being bound in any other way, to flesh. That is why you abolish "the middle wall."[28] What answer shall I give, unlearned as I am and no philosopher? Mind mingles with mind, closer to Godhead as it is and more familiar, through it mediating between Godhead and the grossness of flesh.[29]

9. Let us see then what account they give of the "in-manning" ("fleshing" they call it!). If it is to encompass God who is otherwise incapable of being encompassed, so that he may have "dealings with humans"[30] under a covering of flesh, their mask, their drama of pretense, is neat—I will refrain from mentioning that it was quite possible for him to converse in the way he had done before in the burning bush[31] and in human form.[32] If it was to undo the condemnation of sin through hallowing like by like that he required flesh (because flesh had been condemned), and likewise soul (because soul had been condemned), then he needed mind too: because mind not only fell in Adam, but it was the "protopath," to use the term the physicians use in the case of first ailments. The very thing that had accepted the commandment did not keep the commandment. The very thing that did not keep it ventured its transgression. The very thing that transgressed stood in special need of salvation. The very thing that needed salvation was assumed. Therefore mind was assumed.

10. The matter has now been demonstrated, whether they like it or not, by necessary and "geometrical" (as they themselves say) proofs. You would be doing very nearly the same thing were you, when a man's eye has gone wrong

and his foot been injured, to heal his foot but leave the eye unattended to. Or were you, when a painter has painted something badly, to change his picture but treat him as though he had done a good job and leave it at that. But if, under pressure from these arguments, they take refuge in the possibility of God's saving man even without mind, why that is indeed quite possible without flesh either, by his merely willing it, in the way he effects everything else and has effected it, incorporeally. So abolish the flesh too along with the mind, to make your own absence of mind complete! However, they are deceived by the letter; that is why they head for the flesh in ignorance of the conventions of Scripture. We shall give then a lesson on this point too.

11. Knowledgeable people do not need to be told that throughout Scripture he is called "man" and "son of man." If, though, they insist on the text, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us,"[33] and make that the reason for scraping away man's noblest feature (in the way leather-dressers scrape the thicker hides) so that they can glue God to flesh, then it is high time to tell them that God must be God of "flesh" (in the plural) alone, and not souls as well, because of the Biblical texts, "As you have given him power over all flesh"[34] and "To you shall all flesh come"[35] and "Let all flesh bless his holy name"[36] —"all flesh" i.e., "every human being." Or again, our fathers must have gone down into Egypt disembodied and invisible, and only Joseph's soul been fettered by Pharaoh because of the text, "They went down into Egypt to the number of seventy-five souls,"[37] and "His soul" (a thing incapable of fettering) "passed through iron."[38] People who say this are ignorant of the fact that the words are used here by synecdoche, the whole being indicated by a part, like "The ravens' young" (meaning the whole race of birds) "call upon God."[39] The Pleiades, the Evening Star and the Bear[40] are also mentioned and stand for all stars and their ordering.

12. As well as that, God's love for us could not have been revealed in any way other than by mention of "flesh," meaning he came down for us, down to a meaner level. Everybody of sound sense will agree that flesh is worth less than soul. The text, then, "The Word was made flesh"[41] seems to me to be equivalent to speaking of his being made "sin" and "curse."[42] Not that the Lord was changed into these things—how could he have been?—but by accepting these things he "assumed our acts of transgressions and carried our maladies."[43] That, then, is enough for the present, because the point is clear and easily taken in by ordinary people, and we have not, after all, written this with the intention of

composing a treatise but of checking error. We shall, if you would like, publish a more complete and more extensive discussion on the subject.

13. More intolerable than this, and the very thing that must not be missed out: "Would that those who are upsetting you might mutilate themselves!"[44] introducing, as they do, a second Judaism, a second circumcision, and a second set of sacrifices.[45] In which case, what is to prevent Christ's being born again for the annulling of these very things, and his being betrayed again by Judas, being crucified, buried and rising again, so that the same sequence of events will all recur in accordance with the pagan notion of cycles, when the same movement of the stars bring round the same things? What a piece of arbitrariness: that a particular past event should have happened, another have been disregarded! Let the clever people, who pride themselves on the number of their books,[46] prove it!

14. But since they are "puffed up"[47] by their treatise on the Trinity, telling the lie that we are not sound on the faith[48] and enticing ordinary people, I must tell you that Apollinarius, though he bestows the name of Godhead on the Holy Spirit, has not kept secure the power of the Godhead. He makes the Trinity consist of a Great Spirit, a Greater Son and a Greatest Father, as it were of beam, radiance and Sun (as is clearly written in his texts), a ladder of Godhead not leading up to heaven but taking one down from heaven.[49] But we recognize the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as God, and these as not being mere appellations determining inequalities of ranks or powers, but we recognize that as there is one and the same title so is there one and the same nature, substance and power of Godhead.

15. Anyone who thinks this said aright but who accuses us of communion with heretics is to prove the act ours, and either we shall convince or take our leave. Prior to judgment it is dangerous to make any innovation at all, especially in so important a matter involving such important issues. So we call God and men to witness this, and we bear witness ourselves. Be assured that we should not, even now, have written this had we not seen the Church rent asunder and divided both by other monstrosities and by the current "assembly of vanity."[50]

16. But anyone who, despite our utterances and attestations, whether because of some particular needs or human fear, whether because of extraordinary triviality of mind, whether because hitherto unshepherded and ungoverned, or because of favoritism towards the outlandish and having a readiness for novelties; anyone, I say, who discounts us with scorn as unworthy

of consideration, but sets his course toward such folk, dividing the noble body of the Church, shall carry his own condemnation,[51] whoever he may be, and shall render account to God on the day of judgment.[52] But if the third testament is to be long treatises, modern psalters singing in opposition to David,[53] and metrical gratification, we too will write psalms, and in quantity, and will versify, since we too think we have God's Spirit,[54] if, indeed, the Spirit's grace and not human innovation is involved. I want you to bear witness to these matters before ordinary people so that we are not burdened with the complaint of disregarding evil like this, and that owing to our negligence a wicked dogma has found pasture and acquired strength.

## Notes

[1] Ps 80(79):12(13).

[2] Cf. Jn 10:12.

[3] The Roman Church under Damasus, for church-political reasons connected with the leadership of the Church in Antioch, initially accepted associates of Apollinarius, including Vitalius in 375 (see below Letter II, para 6) though never Apollinarius's views. Condemnation of these followed from 377 onwards (see the Roman documents collected in H. Denzinger and A. Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum* [Freiburg-i-B 1976], nos. 146, 149, 159; cf. also Sozomen *H.E.* 6, 25).

[4] A designation of Christ which turns up in a number of passages in both the Latin and Greek writers from the fourth century onwards. It seems to have been favored at Antioch and not of itself controversial. Gregory, though cool towards it, does not disown it. For a full history of the term, see Alois Grillmeier's essay in *Fragmente zur Christologie* (Freiburg i B, 1997), 152–214.

[5] Cf. Ps 55(54):19(20); Ps 74(73):12; Heb 1:2.

[6] The disclaimer cast in the form of anathema was taken over from conciliar confessions and had become common in public professions of faith; cf. e.g. Apollinarius' Letter to Jovian (H. Lietzmann, *Apollinaris von Laodicea und seine Schule* [Tübingen, 1904], 250f.) and below Vitalius' profession of faith. The series of anathematisms begins with the title of the BVM, which was to become a watchword in the Nestorian controversy. Prior to that, its most striking occurrences are in the formula of faith presented at the council which met in Antioch in 324, prefatory to the council at Nicaea (325); the complaint of the Emperor Julian against Christians: "You are continually calling Mary 'Mother of God' "; and here, where the emphasis is on both nouns: *mother*, because real birth is affirmed, as against the "Gnostic" claim of the next anathema, *God*, because her Son is God consubstantial with his Father.

[7] Eph 1:5 etc.

[8] 2 Cor 4:16.

[9] Gregory rejects Diodore's dualism of sons but accepts the duality of natures. He does not say whether the duality continues after their "coalescence," a term favored by Apollinarians and to be rejected by the Church at large as implying a dissolution of both natures. The terminology and the arguments of subsequent hot christological discussion are hinted at here innocently.

[10] The word for "joining" which Gregory insists on, has the same root as the word for "conjunction"

that later christology is to reject as too weak to denote true incarnation. Gregory does not, I think, exclude the analogy of prophetic inspiration in the case of Christ; he requires that it be tempered by a stronger analogy of composition.

11 The Jews who put Jesus to death.

12 Christ "grew in wisdom and understanding" (Lk 2:52) but this does not, for Gregory, imply that he was an "adopted son." Whether any Christian theologian of standing ever maintained such a view is dubious. Perhaps Paul of Samosata, bishop of Antioch, deposed 268, either did so or came near to it.

13 Lk 24:50.

14 Zech 12:10; Jn 19:37.

15 Mt 17:2 and parr.

16 I.e. both flesh=manhood and Godhead are to be mentioned. For the idea that the Godhead predominates cf. *Oration* 29, 19.

17 Vitalius rejects this expressly in his profession of faith, see below.

18 1 Cor 15:47.

19 1 Cor 15:48.

20 Jn 3:13.

21 Cf. Jn 1:3.

22 Eph 3:17.

23 The earlier term, "union," was subsequently favored by the Church as a description of the relation of the two natures in Christ, but not the term "blending" (see above on "coalescence").

24 The "communicatio idiomatum," so that it may be said, since they are one and the same subject, that Jesus created the world and that God died on the Cross.

25 Ex 7:1.

26 Josh 1:15.

27 1 Cor 5:7.

28 Eph 2:14.

29 Divine incarnation, we may interpret Gregory as saying, is possible because of an affinity between divine and human intellect cf. *Oration* 29, 19 above, page 86.

30 Bar 3:38.

31 Ex 3:2.

32 Gen 18:1ff; 32:24.

33 Jn 1:14.

34 Jn 17:2.

35 Ps 65(64):2(3).

36 Ps 145(144):21.

37 Acts 7:14.

38 Ps 105(104):18.

39 Ps 147(146):9.

[40] Job 38:31f.

[41] Jn 1:14.

[42] 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13.

[43] Cf. Is 53:4; 1 Pet 2:24.

[44] Gal 5:12.

[45] I do not understand what teaching of Apollinarius this points to: certainly his alleged millenarianism, but why should that imply that "we repeat the same things" (see Letter two para. 5)? Perhaps the argument is that if there is to be a first resurrection of the just followed by a 1,000-year reign of Christ, then all events are in principle to be repeated. Like the suggestion above that Apollinarius taught that Christ had brought his flesh down from heaven, this is no doubt mostly "smear."

[46] Such books do not survive.

[47] 1 Cor 8:1.

[48] Cf. Titus 1:13.

[49] Cf. Apollinarius' letter to Basil (Basil. Ep. 363) where the Son is spoken of as "reduced light" in relation to the Father's light. As we have only Gregory's version of what Apollinarius said, we do not know exactly what he meant. It would be quite in keeping with Nicene teaching to speak of the Father as "greater" than the Son *qua* cause, and similarly of the Son as "greater" than the Spirit. Perhaps, though, Apollinarius simply used the by now antiquated illustration (beam-radiance-Sun) which Gregory "smears" as implying "Arianism."

[50] Ps 26(25):4.

[51] Gal 5:10.

[52] Mt 12:36.

[53] Apollinarius had a high reputation as a skilled and popular hymnographer (see Sozomen *HE* 6,25).

[54] 1 Cor 7:40.

# LETTER 102
# The Second Letter to Cledonius the Presbyter

1. Since many are approaching your devout self, seeking a full explanation on a matter of faith, you kindly asked us for our view as a concise rule and standard. Which is why we write to your devout self what you knew even before this letter: that we cannot esteem, and never have esteemed anything more highly than the creed of the holy fathers assembled at Nicaea for the condemnation of the Arian heresy. That faith we belong to, and with God's help, shall belong to, with the addition to the article on the Holy Spirit of what they left out,[1] because the point was not mooted then: because recognizing, as we do, the Holy Spirit too as God, we must acknowledge Father, Son and Holy Spirit as of one Godhead. So with those who hold and teach this view you should be in communion, since we are too, and should repudiate those of a different persuasion and treat them as strangers to the Catholic Church.

2. Since a question is being mooted concerning the divine "inmanning," or "fleshing,"[2] you should expressly declare to all, in reference to ourselves, that we treat the Son of God begotten of the Father and thereafter of the Virgin Mary as a single item, and that we do not name two sons but worship one and the same Son in undivided Godhead and honor. Whoever does not agree with this, whether now or later, will account to God on the day of judgment.[3]

3. Our objection, then, and counter-argument to their mindless opinion on the mind, in brief is as follows: they are almost alone in actually suffering the same fate as the object of their dogmatizing, when they mindlessly amputate the mind. But in order that they may not accuse us of first accepting and now rejecting the creed of dear Vitalius,[4] who was asked for a written statement by blessed Damasus of Rome, we shall indicate the matter in brief. These people when they teach their theology to their genuine disciples, the initiates of their mysteries, in the same way as the Manichees teach their so-called "elect," they unveil the whole of their disease, scarcely ascribing even flesh to the Savior. But whenever they are convicted by the common suppositions on the "inmanning" set forth by Scripture, they profess under pressure the formulae of true religion, whilst abusing the mind. They profess the human being as not without soul, not without mind, not incomplete; but they bring us in a Godhead in itself soul,

reason, mind. This it was that blended[5] on its own with the flesh, but not with our human condition—though, of course, his sinlessness was superior to our level and purged our passions.

4. In this way, at any rate, they will very foolishly misinterpret the text, "But we have the mind of Christ."[6] They will say that Christ's mind is his Godhead, not taking the text as we do, as meaning that those who have purged their minds by imitation of his mind, making them coincide with this, are those who are spoken of as having the mind of Christ. In the same way those who are attested to have Christ's flesh are people who have educated the flesh and accordingly have become fellows in body and partners of Christ.[7] "As we wore the image of the earthly," it says, "so we shall wear the image of the heavenly."[8] Thus the "complete human being" they dogmatize about is not one who has been tempted at all point as we are without sin,[9] but an amalgam of God and flesh.[10] What, they say, could be more complete[11] than that!

5. They do the same mischief to the expression "inmanning," interpreting "he was inmanned" not as his presence in a humanity he has surrounded himself with, according to the text, "For he himself knew what was in man."[12] No, they say and teach that it means he conversed and associated with human beings, taking refuge in the text, "After that he was seen on earth and had dealings with humans."[13] Why prolong the contest? Those who discard the human being and the inner image and only give our visible exterior a fresh, clean mask are so much at war with themselves that the flesh is sometimes the motive for fleshly and coarse interpretations of other matters. That is where their second Judaism takes its rise:[14] the mad thousand-year[15] luxuriating in paradise and well nigh the notion that we repeat the same things. Sometimes they present us with illusion, rather than reality, of flesh, claiming that it underwent none of our experiences all of which are connected with sin; in reference to that they exploit the apostolic words, without understanding or using them in an apostolic manner, about our Savior's being made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man,[16] claiming that this does not mean a human form but a deceptive, illusory appearance.

6. Seeing that these same biblical expressions, understood in a good sense, go along with true religion, but misinterpreted contain impiety, it is no wonder that we too took Vitalius' words in the more religious sense, wanting to trust him, whereas others are enraged by what he has written. That seems to me

to be why Damasus too changed his mind on finding out that they stood by their earlier interpretations; they have been disowned, Damasus having repudiated their document on the faith, angry at their deceit which he suffered as a result of his simplicity.

7. Having been plainly rebutted on these matters, they are not to behave badly towards us, but to be ashamed; not to tell lies against us but to shrink. They should wipe their gates clean of that huge and extraordinary advertisement of their orthodoxy, when they deceive incomers with the dilemma whether they should worship God-clad man or flesh-clad God. What could be more irrational, even if these modern heralds of truth set great store by the slogan? Indeed, with its brisk repetition of the words in the opposite order, it does have a certain sophistical charm as a piece of startling jugglery enjoyable by the uneducated; but it is utterly ridiculous and foolish. If you exchange "man" for "flesh," in relation to God ("man" pleases us, "flesh" pleases them!) then what will be the effect of using this striking and miraculously revealed inversion? That we ought to worship not God-clad man but man-clad God. How absurd! They tell us today the wisdom that got hidden after Christ. It is good enough for tears. If the faith started thirty years ago, nigh on four hundred years having passed since Christ appeared, our Gospel meanwhile has been long empty, our faith empty[17] and the martyrs witnessed in vain; in vain did such great governors stand at the head of the people—courtesy of these verses and not the faith.

8. Who will not admire them for their education as they clearly discriminate aspects of Christ:[18] allocating his being born,[19] being tempted,[20] hungering,[21] thirsting,[22] being tired[23] and sleeping[24] to the human, and reckoning to the Godhead his glorification by angels,[25] his conquest and putting to flight of the Tempter,[26] and likewise his walking on top of the water?[27] They say, "Where have you laid Lazarus?"[28] is at our level, but crying, "Lazarus, come forth!"[29] and raising a man dead four days[30] a level above us. As for his being in agony,[31] being crucified[32] and buried,[33] that belongs to his outer covering, whereas his heartening people,[34] his resurrection[35] and ascension[36] belong to the inner treasure. Next they accuse us of introducing two disconnected or hostile natures, of partitioning the wonderful, supernatural union; it being necessary either not to do what they condemn or not to condemn what they practice, had they been capable of self-consistency instead of saying their own words as well as those of their adversaries. That is the kind of thing their irrationality is: so much in contradiction with itself and with the truth that

they neither notice nor are embarrassed when they fall into their own snares.

9. If anyone thinks we are writing or saying this willingly and not under compulsion, that we are doing our best to prevent, rather than being much bent on, union, he is to know that his guess at our desires is quite wrong. For us nothing is or has been more precious than peace, a conviction our actions themselves convey, even though their deeds and their insolent behavior towards us entirely exclude a common mind.

## Notes

1 This is only dubiously a reference to the "Nicene" creed as promulgated by the Council of Constantinople (381). I think (but it is a moot point) that Gregory was too much a Nicene "fundamentalist" to countenance any addition to the text of the creed of Nicaea (325), however much he was instrumental in the composition of the Constantinopolitan modification.

2 "Inmanning" had been in the literature for many years, at least since Origen; "fleshing" was the preferred term for Apollinarius. "Or" is here the sign of equivalence in meaning.

3 Cf. Mt 12:36.

4 "Dear" is honorific only, (cf. "Dear sir" at the start of a modern letter). The following extract from a profession of faith by Vitalius (probably that referred to here) has been preserved (H. Lietzmann, *Apollinaris von Laodicea und seine Schule* [Tübingen, 1904], 273):

Furthermore, concerning the fleshly economy of the Savior, we believe that the fleshing of God the Word has been effected for the renewal of humanity whilst he remains unaltered and unchanged. For being truly Son of God *qua* his eternal generation from God, he became also son of man *qua* his birth from a virgin; he is one and the same perfect God *qua* Godhead and consubstantial with the Father, and the same perfect man *qua* birth from a virgin, and consubstantial with men *qua* the flesh. Whoever says that Christ has his body from heaven or is consubstantial with God *qua* the flesh, is to be anathema. Whoever does not confess that the flesh of the Lord from the holy Virgin is consubstantial with men, is to be anathema. Whoever says that our Lord and Savior, born, *qua* the flesh, from the Holy Spirit and Mary the Virgin, is without soul or feeling or reason or mind, is to be anathema. Whoever dares to say that Christ suffered in Godhead and not in flesh, as it is written (1 Peter 4:1), is to be anathema. Whoever divides and parts our Lord and Savior and says that God the Son and Word is one thing and the assumed man another, and does not confess one and the same Son, is to be anathema.

5 On the use of the term "blending," see note to Ep. 101, para. 5.

6 1 Cor 2:16.

7 Cf. Eph 3:6.

8 1 Cor 15:49.

9 Heb 4:15.

10 The term "amalgam" has in Greek the same root as "coalesced," in Ep. 101, para 5.

11 Or "perfect," as in Vitalius' profession of faith.

12 Jn 2:25.

13 Bar 3:38.

[14] See above on Letter One, para 12. It may be that Gregory modifies his language here: no talk of second circumcision or sacrifices, and there is the less forthright “well nigh the notion” of a cyclic repetition.

[15] Cf. Rev 20:4.

[16] Phil 2:7.

[17] 1 Cor 15:14.

[18] Gregory does not complain of the Apollinarian differentiation of the predicates (cf. *Or.* 30, 1 with reference to the examples given in *Or.* 29), but objects to being told that he is at the same time dividing the natures after the union. Division of the natures after the union was always the criticism to be leveled by “monophysites” against Chalcedonians.

[19] Mt 1:16.

[20] Mt 4:1.

[21] Mt 4:3 and parr.

[22] Jn 19:28, cf. 4:7.

[23] Jn 4:6.

[24] Mt 8:24 and parr.

[25] Lk 2:8ff.

[26] Cf. Mt 4:10f and Lk 4:12f.

[27] Mt 14:25 and parr.

[28] Jn 11:34.

[29] Jn 11:43.

[30] Jn 11:17.

[31] Lk 22:44.

[32] Mt 27:35 etc.

[33] Mt 27:60 etc.

[34] Cf. Jn 16:33; Mt 9:2 and 14:27 etc.

[35] Mt 28:6ff and parr.

[36] Mk 16:19; Lk 24:51; Acts 1:9.

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# Table of Contents


Acknowledgements
Gregory of Nazianzus: An Introduction for the Reader
- Career and Personality: A Brief Sketch
- Background in Historical Theology to the Five Theological Orations
  - Title and contents
  - The Anomean opposition
  - The Anomean legacy and that of the Cappadocians: doctrines and dialectics
- Reading the Five Theological Orations: Some Points of Reference

oration 27 An Introductory Sermon against the Eunomians1
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- Notes

oration 28 On the Doctrine of God
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 11
- 12
- 13

14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
Notes
oration 29 On the Son
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17

18
19
20
21
Notes
oration 30 On the Son
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
Notes
oration 31 On the Holy Spirit
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8

9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
Notes
The Two Letters to Cledonius: An Introduction
The background
A Guide by Way of Summary to the Two Letters
Letter One
Letter Two
letter 101 The First Letter to Cledonius the Presbyter
Notes
letter 102 The Second Letter to Cledonius the Presbyter
Notes
Select Bibliography
Texts and editions of the Five Theological Orations:

Texts and editions of the Letters 101 and 102 to Cledonius
Secondary Literature
The Life and Career of Gregory
Gregory as Writer and Thinker
The Development of the Doctrine of God in Trinity in the Fourth Century
The Anomeans
The Development of Doctrines of the Person of Christ
Apollinarius